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SF's CHINATOWN

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PEAK SEASON
RECIPES

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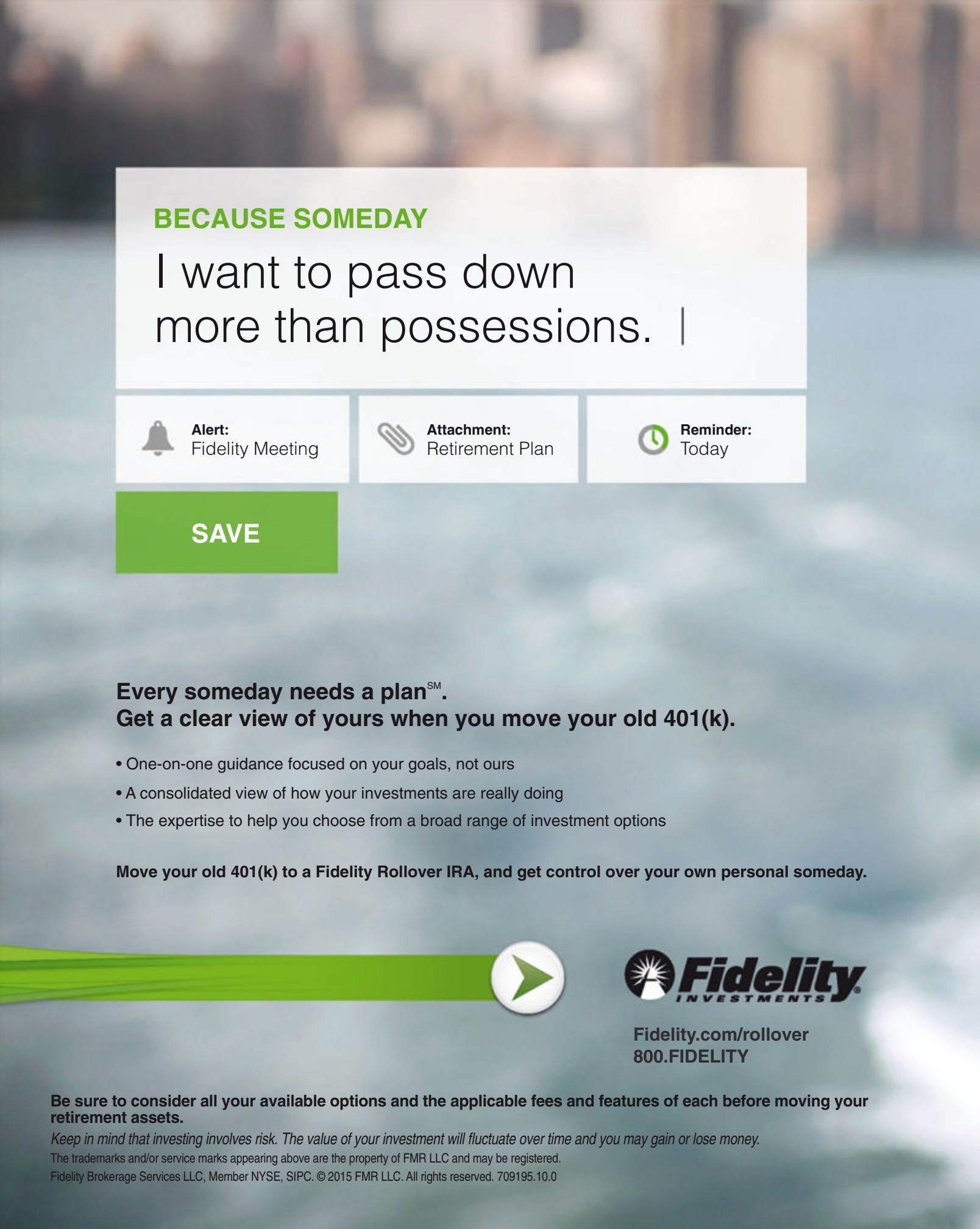
THE BEST ROAD-TRIP EATS

Delicious detours from Santa Barbara to Puget Sound



The Marshall Store's Fish Taco Recipe
P. 80

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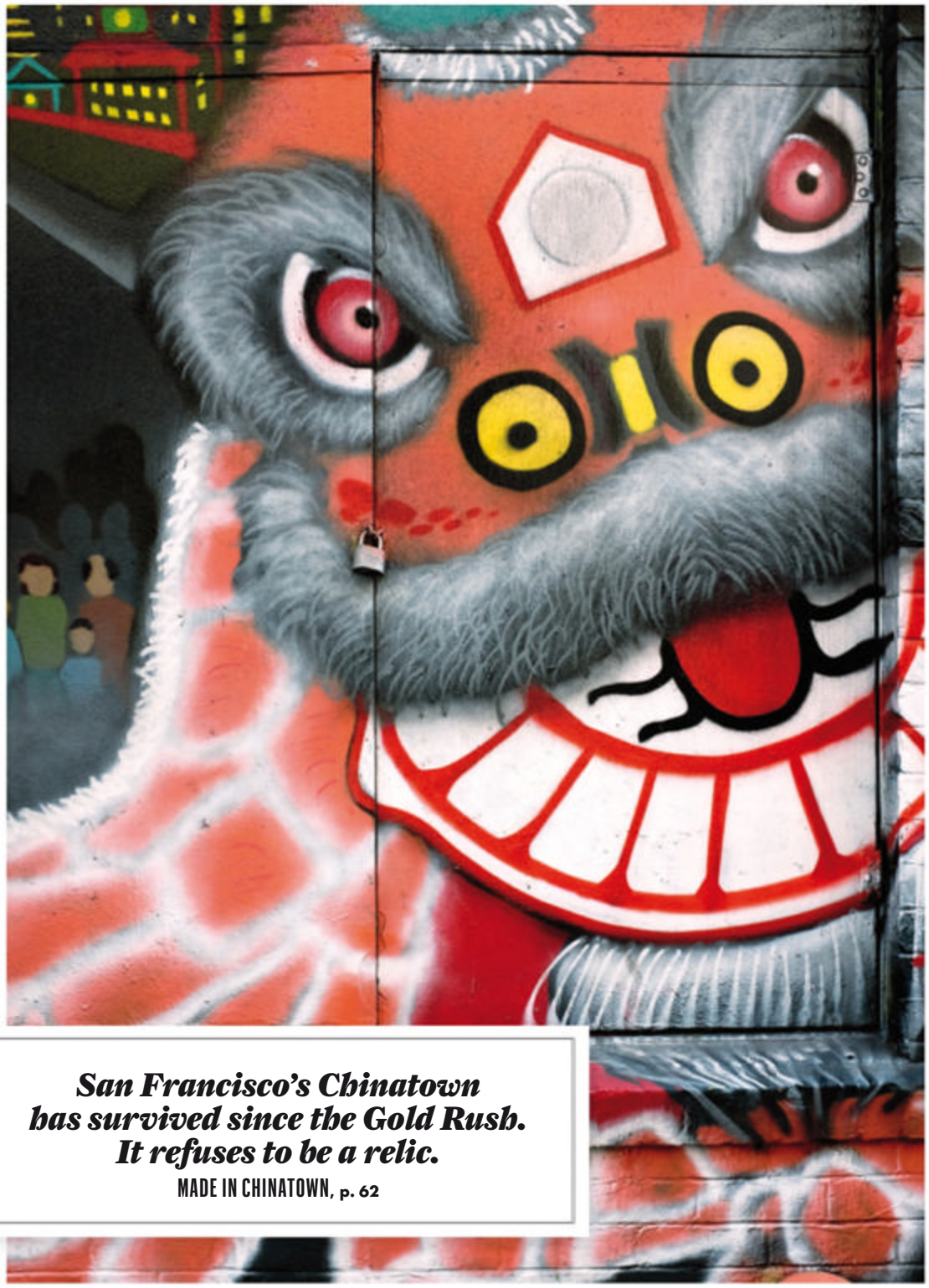




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Sunset
EXPERIENCE the WEST

March



San Francisco's Chinatown has survived since the Gold Rush. It refuses to be a relic.

MADE IN CHINATOWN, p. 62

Photograph by THOMAS J. STORY

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FULL BLOOM

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MADE IN CHINATOWN

To truly know what's cooking in San Francisco's continuously changing Chinatown, you need to see it with an insider. Restaurateur, cookbook author, and TV host Martin Yan takes us on a tour. *By Bonnie Tsui*

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Cover photograph by Thomas J. Story; food styling by Karen Shinto; prop styling by Emma Star Jensen

Sunset
EXPERIENCE the WEST

March



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Our full guide to nutrition, ingredients, and techniques: *sunset.com/cookingguide.*

CORRECTION

In January's "The Real Balboa Park," we mentioned the San Diego Natural History Museum's wave machines and magnets; those hands-on exhibits have closed. The Nat's newest exhibit is *Coast to Cactus in Southern California,* which explores the region's diverse terrain, plants, and animals. *$17; sdnhm.org.*



GET MORE PHOTOS + VIDEOS IN OUR DIGITAL MAGAZINE

Take *Sunset* wherever you roam with our Digital Editions for **iPad, iPhone, Android,** and **Kindle Fire.** You'll get every story from our print magazine, plus bonus features. **This month:** See videos on how to stake dahlias and smoke bacon, and hear our writers read their stories for the *Sunset* Voices series. Get more info: *sunset.com/learnmore.*

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: THOMAS J. STORY, ANNABELLE BREAKEY (4), ERIC BRANDON GOMEZ


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LOVE BLOOMS





SUNSET FLOWERS FOR A SUNSET BRIDE
Lauren's bouquet included dahlias and lamb's ears from the Test Garden; her tabletop arrangements included 'Benary's Giant Salmon Rose' zinnias, plus kumquats harvested from a courtyard on *Sunset*'s campus.

Lauren Dunec Hoang, *Sunset*'s garden design assistant, is always coming up with new projects to try in our Test Garden. In the past year, she and her colleagues built a low-water patio fountain, grew 12 varieties of berries in a berry "amphitheater," and figured out a gorgeous way to landscape with lettuce. So no surprise that when Lauren got engaged last spring, the Test Garden received an infusion of love. Starting with seeds in February, by June she had transformed it into a cutting garden that yielded a bumper crop of bouquets, boutonnieres, flower crowns, and centerpieces.

Given everything that goes into planning a wedding, the idea of growing your own flowers and getting them to peak bloom on the Big Day might seem unnecessarily stressful. (Bridezilla, outdoor edition?) But Lauren found that taking much of her wedding prep outside had the opposite effect. Her mother, a longtime gardener, lent Lauren welcome advice for getting the look she wanted: "Collaborating with my mom on something that is her expertise was such a good way to involve her, instead of butting heads over what color the tablecloths were," she says.

Expert growers embraced her project too. Nicholas Gitts, owner of Swan Island Dahlias in Canby, Oregon, handpicked his favorites to grow for her bouquet. Others weighed in with advice on flowers with long bloom times (to accommodate both *Sunset*'s photography schedule and the wedding date). Annie Hayes, owner of Annie's Annuals and Perennials, introduced her to Minoan lace, which looks like Queen Anne's lace but isn't invasive and substitutes nicely for baby's breath. "I learned so much," Lauren says. "Plus when you grow your own, you learn to use flowers in all their stages—the buds, the blooms, even the spiny centers of *Echinacea*."

The results were unique, stunning, and deeply meaningful for Lauren: "Walking down the aisle with flowers I knew my mom had grown and my grandma used to grow before her made it all extremely personal."

Lauren and her husband, Don (who put in many hours of his own weeding, watering, and deadheading on weekends—not a bad start to a marriage), held their ceremony last August in the redwood grove on our campus. "Now all of my friends are asking me to make their wedding bouquets," Lauren says. "But that's a whole other thing. I'm looking forward to just being a guest!"

Have your own favorite flowers to grow? We want to see them! (Tag us on Instagram *@sunsetmag*.)

And speaking of big events: I hope you'll join me in L.A. for the All-Star Chef Classic, March 11–14. Four days of chefs' tastings and a blow-out cook-off at the end ... nobody had to convince me! Get info at *allstarchefclassic.com*.



PEGGY NORTHROP, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
@Peggy_Sunset | readerletters@sunset.com

HUNT FOR THE BEST TACO

Nothing against college basketball, but we'd rather go mad over something that *really* matters, like tacos. We've been polling our friends, neighbors, and followers on Facebook and Twitter for their favorite taquerias and Mexican restaurants around the West with the goal of anointing the very best taco out there. Do fish tacos in San Diego deserve the top honors? (Surely the ones on our cover from The Marshall Store would be contenders.) Or is it the Navajo style of tacos in the Southwest that blows your mind? Visit *sunset.com/tacohunt* during the month of March to vote in our bracket-style competition. We'll unveil the results in an upcoming issue.

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FROM FAR LEFT: KURT BOOMER PHOTOGRAPHY (2); THOMAS J. STORY

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BEST OF THE WEST

WHAT WE'RE TRACKING THIS MONTH

BEST GETAWAY

Insta-park

The best way, of course, to see the West's great national parks would be to immerse yourself in one for, say, a week or two. But these days, who has that kind of time? Sneaking away for a long weekend, though—that's doable, and given four days, outfitter Mountain Travel Sobek promises to show you the highlights of such classic parks as Death Valley, Bryce Canyon, Zion (shown here), Rocky Mountain, or Grand Canyon. And not just a stick-your-iPhone-out-the-bus-window drive-by, but an itinerary with actual hikes. Outside. On your own two feet. How is this possible? These parks are close to busy air hubs like Las Vegas, Denver, or Phoenix—that's why Yellowstone's not an option—and the number of people in each group is limited to a dozen, so cat herding is kept to a minimum. *From $1,950/person; mtsobek.com.*

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BEST RECASTING

ART OF COOKING

We love Workshop Residence, in San Francisco's Dogpatch hood: The locally made pieces that result from each artist's two-month residency at the studio/shop are always thought provoking. What they aren't always is utilitarian. These cast-iron "wood grain" dutch ovens, though, from sculptor Gay Outlaw and her husband, woodworker Bob Schmitz, are not only gorgeous, but also functional. Given that her works tend to cost in the high five figures—she has pieces in the S.F. Museum of Modern Art's collection—they're a bargain too. *$180; workshopresidence.com.*



BEST LAYOVER

Ready for takeoff

Farm-to-table favorite Root Down made a splash in August 2013 when a spin-off restaurant festooned with living walls opened in Denver International Airport's Concourse C. Nailing down the plant mix took more than a year, though. (Seems security-conscious terminals are tough on growing things.) Now, however, the likes of heartleaf philodendron and chocolate mint are thriving, lit by a chandelier made from old globes. It's almost enough to make us miss our flight. Almost. *$$; rootdowndia.com.*

BEST LAST CHANCE

ALOHA LAND

If you're lucky enough to be in Honolulu this month, don't miss the Bishop Museum's fascinating look at the last century-plus of Hawaiian history. *Change: 125 Years Through the Eyes of Bishop Museum* is essentially one big rummage through the attic of our 50th state. See the price of a plumeria lei skyrocket from 25 cents in 1937 to $6 in 2014! Make high-rises sprout on Waikiki Beach with a swipe of your finger! (Thanks to the magic of touch screens.) Spot *Batman*'s Adam West modeling madras shorts in a 1955 fashion shoot atop Diamond Head! And if you live in Hawaii but haven't yet seen the exhibition ... well, shame on you. (You still have time, though—it closes March 16.) *$20; bishopmuseum.org.*





WIN IT

For a chance to win tickets to Yountville Live, go to *sunset.com/giveaway.*

BEST WINE-Y WEEKEND

Perfect timing

Sure, summer offers warm evenings and autumn the excitement of the harvest, but our favorite time of year in the Napa Valley is early spring. The crowds have ebbed, the weather's cool enough to hike and bike even at midday, and the hotels, restaurants, and wineries have all caught their collective breath. This is also when you'll find events like this year's inaugural Yountville Live (brought to you in part by *Sunset*): four days of music, dinners at such local stars as Bottega, and the Taste of Yountville. Addendum is still closed for the season, but maybe—hint, hint—Thomas Keller will pony up some of his famous fried chicken? *Passes from $450; Mar 19–22; yountvillelive.com.*

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: WORKSHOP RESIDENCE, ADAM LARKEY, ROY JEROME BAKER, MISTI LAYNE


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NESTING INSTINCT

BEST FRESH START



After discovering ceramics as a student in San Francisco, Jim Schatz went East to make it big. Now he's come home to the Golden State—a change of scene that's sparked a whole new line of works.

IT WAS JIM SCHATZ'S glossy, egg-shaped birdhouses that first caught the design world's eye, but when the ceramist moved to L.A. last year from upstate New York, he was inspired, he says, to expand his focus to the human home. Now, the shelves of his Boyle Heights studio are piled with his Au Gratin baking dishes, whose not-quite-even edges make a virtue of imperfection; a new-this-spring collection of plates and bowls in both stoneware and porcelain; the positively sculptural Brutal Drip coffeemaker; and its brand-new Tea Maker sibling (a few examples of which sit on the top shelf, above right). We pulled him away from his kiln for a quick visit.

What brought you back to California? I loved what was happening in Los Angeles. The creative energy is wonderful right now—a lot of people are making things here, and the city supports that endeavor. So in June, I moved out here with my fiancé, Peter. We just did the Artists & Fleas market downtown and we met a lot of great people there, people opening restaurants, who might be interested in our new dinnerware collection. They *loved* the Brutal Drip coffeemaker.

Which is very different from your birdhouses. What's its story? I'd been doing pour overs with a Chemex and I kept breaking the Chemex. I wanted something that would work as a pour over but not break. It's not something you can throw on a wheel—the original Brutal Drip was hand-built, and now they are cast from the mold. I love the way it feels—almost like something from another century, from an archaeological dig somewhere. We've been using it for the past six months, so I know it works really well—that's important to me, that things are beautiful but also work.



What's in Schatz's own pot? Sometimes Stumptown, sometimes Starbucks.

Any tips for using it? The important thing is that you grind the beans just right so it drips properly. It can't be too fine—I have this hand grinder, a Hario, that I use. I don't know if that adds a lot, but I like doing it, so ...

Will birds still play a big part in your life? This section of Boyle Heights is very industrial, so there's not a lot of them. But we've found a house nearby, and the trees there are much older and I see birds flitting around. I can't wait to get there and hang the feeders. I just always do, wherever I'm at. I miss some of the ones from upstate, like my chickadee friends and the other winter birds, but I'm sure I'm going to make new friends here. *From $65; jschatz.com.*

TOP: ANGIE SMITH

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BEST NEW/OLD CLUB

BRING ON THE NIGHT

Given the wild success of San Francisco's rebooted Tosca Cafe, it shouldn't be surprising that other big-name restaurateurs are looking for similarly historic-but-endangered S.F. nightspots to reinvent. This time, the venue getting a hand is the Cafe du Nord, housed in the eccentric 1907 Swedish American Hall on a stretch of upper Market Street being colonized by glassy new apartment buildings. Playing the role of savior is the Ne Timeas Restaurant Group (the guys behind the perpetually mobbed Flour + Water and Central Kitchen), with a cocktail assist from their Mission District neighbors The Bon Vivants, who run the equally trendy bar Trick Dog. It does sound as if the live music that had been a standby at the Cafe du Nord will become less important than the food and drink being served, but at least the club itself will survive. *on.fb.me/15CND4u.*

BEST STILL LIFE

COLOR THERAPY

As we wandered the aisles of San Francisco's West Coast Craft show this past December, the booths became a blur of waxed-canvas tote bags and dangly brass earrings and recycled-sail tote bags and stripey clay mugs and, oh, look, reclaimed-denim tote bags… then we stopped, struck by a quartet of simple, colorful screen prints by Chelsea Heffner, founder of the WildCraft Studio School. At the school, which sits on a hill above the Columbia River Gorge, you can attend weekend workshops in weaving cedar baskets, foraging for mushrooms, building kilns, felting slippers, and generally ignoring the modern world. But if you can't get away, trust us: Gazing into one of these quietly gorgeous prints is the next best thing. *$150; wildcraft.bigcartel.com.*



BEST NEW PLAY SPACE



Screen-free zone

The biophilia concept isn't new—more than 30 years ago, biologist Edward O. Wilson came up with the idea that humans thrive best when connected to nature. But suddenly we're all worried about "nature deficit disorder": kids forgetting how to play outside. One fix? Trading swings and seesaws and asphalt for a playground of logs and pinecones and boulders and trees and grassy mounds and streams and sand. (Mud pies!) One of the country's largest urban nature-based play areas opened last fall in Southeast Portland's Westmoreland Park, as part of a project converting a duck pond into wetlands. Maybe the coolest thing, though, is that nature itself decided to join in: A few days before the park's official unveiling, salmon appeared in the park's Crystal Springs Creek for the first time in decades. *portlandoregon.gov.*

BEST HOTEL REHAB



Spring break As you might guess from its name, the 141-room Graduate hotel in Tempe, Arizona, belongs to a new chain colonizing college towns, and clearly its designers did their homework—the Wes Anderson aesthetic is bound to appeal to 1970s-obsessed Arizona State students as well as visiting Gen X moms and dads. But what makes this spot special: It's across the street from the university's ASU Gammage theater, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright and this month presenting *Rodgers + Hammerstein's Cinderella (Mar 10–15).* Plus, the A's, Giants, Angels, Rockies, and Diamondbacks all practice nearby. *From $179; graduatetempe.com.*

FROM LEFT: CHRISTIAN HORAN, THOMAS J. STORY

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ASK A LOCAL

THE REAL VENICE

Where to eat, drink, and dip your toes in L.A.'s coolest beachfront neighborhood

Venice Beach Boardwalk
p. 22

JESSICA SAMPLE

ASK A LOCAL

L.A.'s iconic beach community has come a long way from its skate punk days. We tapped two locals to lead us through the land of surf breaks and kale juice. AS TOLD TO CASEY HATFIELD-CHIOTTI



COURTNEY GUERRA
Urban farmer
(courtneyguerrafarms.com)



JOHN MOORE
Fashion designer
(thepopstudio.com)

BEST PLACE FOR PEOPLE-WATCHING

Venice Beach Boardwalk

JOHN MOORE There's no better place to witness the energy of Venice. Every day is an event on the boardwalk. I love it when they have basketball tournaments; I'll ride my bike down to the old courts and sit on the sidelines and just watch the guys play all day. Such a great vibe down there.

COURTNEY GUERRA Walk out onto the boardwalk and you're going to see something crazy. That's Venice. I was once with a friend when this guy came up to us—long, wild hair, flip-flops, aloha shirt—and told us to Google him. His name was Jeff Dowd. Found out he's the guy the Coen brothers based the Dude on in *The Big Lebowski*. Which happens to be one of my top three all-time favorite movies. He's just another crazy Venetian.



General Store

I WANT THAT VENICE LOOK

General Store

1801 Lincoln Blvd.; shop-generalstore.com.

JM I often go to Tradesmen on Lincoln for new men's clothing, and up the block is a shop I'm a partner in called General Store. I'm into vintage, and I think the Venice look is very much about vintage. I'm nostalgic for the Venice of the '50s, '60s, and '70s. General Store has an amazing assortment. I tend to buy my new clothes at Tradesmen, then pick up a great vintage flannel or pair of jeans here. I like the dichotomy of that look.

The Golden State

thegoldenstatestore.com.

CG Nice place for California-style without being too hipster. Good denim and leather, cool hats, and they carry fantastic bikinis all year round. Some of the clothes have this Native American influence, with feathers and lots of fringe. I walk down Abbot Kinney, Venice's main street, and see people who make it look so easy, but I know it's not that easy. There are many layers and textures to pulling off that style.

HAPPY HOUR TIME

Cerveteca

$$; 523 Rose Ave.; cervetecala.com.

CG Fantastic beer list, both by the bottle and on tap. Plus phenomenal ceviche, and chips and guacamole for $7. I'd say it's elevated cantina food but done in the vein of farm-to-table, so it's really well sourced. And the dishes pair perfectly with a Belgian-style beer or an IPA.

VENICE VEGAN

Café Gratitude

$$; 512 Rose; cafegratitude.com.

CG The restaurant specializes in vegan and raw—but I actually think it's more popular with nonvegans. The food manages to be



flavorful and hardy without being scary or too weird. I like the I Am Mucho, which is basically their version of a Mexican bowl,

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: TODD GLASER, MARIKO REED, JIRO SCHNEIDER



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Café Gratitude

with black beans, corn, guacamole, and salsa verde.

TOP JUICE SPOT

Moon Juice

507 Rose; moonjuiceshop.com.

CG I usually get the Canyon Greens or the Goodness Green juice, which is made with kale, spinach, and celery. They have these rolled oats soaked overnight in almond milk that are fantastic. That's my go-to on a normal weekday. It's a very small shop, bright with natural light, decorated with lots of beautiful succulents, and the staff is very knowledgeable about the juices and supplements on the menu. They take care of you.

JM I'm there too many mornings a week. I think because it's not on Abbot Kinney, it gets overlooked. I'll buy three juices at a time and leave them in my refrigerator. The Silver Strawberry with almond milk is my favorite.



BIG-NIGHT-OUT DINNER

Ado

$$$; 796 Main St.; adovenice.com.

JM It's a little two-story yellow Craftsman off Pacific, right at the base of Abbot Kinney. Every time I'm hungry and want to have a special dinner, we go there. I order a great bottle of wine and eat way too much bread, then I'll usually get whatever seafood pasta is on the menu with truffles. There's often something with fresh truffle sauce.

RESTAURANT FOR CELEB SIGHTINGS

Gjelina

$$; 1429 Abbot Kinney Blvd.; gjelina.com.

CG Apparently if you are a celebrity and you're dining in Venice, you are required to eat here. I've seen Jay-Z and Beyoncé, Gwyneth Paltrow, former Laker Pau Gasol. I grew up in Southern California, so I'm used to spotting celebrities, but I've never seen anything like Gjelina. Always someone in there. Sometimes you have to look closely because the celebrities will look like normal people. Then you notice the bodyguard and you know.

BEST EVENT

First Fridays

Mar 6; abbotkinney firstfridays.com.

CG Food trucks come from all over Los Angeles and line the streets and shops around Abbot Kinney Boulevard each month. I'm always amazed at the diversity here. You'll usually find a good mix of local artists, jewelry makers, people selling vinyl. Lots of families too. Not too long ago, I scored an Elvis Presley album.

FAVORITE STRETCH OF BEACH

South of the Pier

100 yards south of the Venice Fishing Pier.

JM You'll find me here most mornings. It's a short bike ride from my house, and my kids love being on the beach; we always see friends, and the waves are fun. Not too big, but consistent. A lot of people go out to the Breakwater or North of the Pier, which is more popular. But this is quieter. I've been going to the same patch of sand for 15 years. My kids have grown up right there.

Beach Volleyball Courts

At the end of Rose Ave. at Speedway.

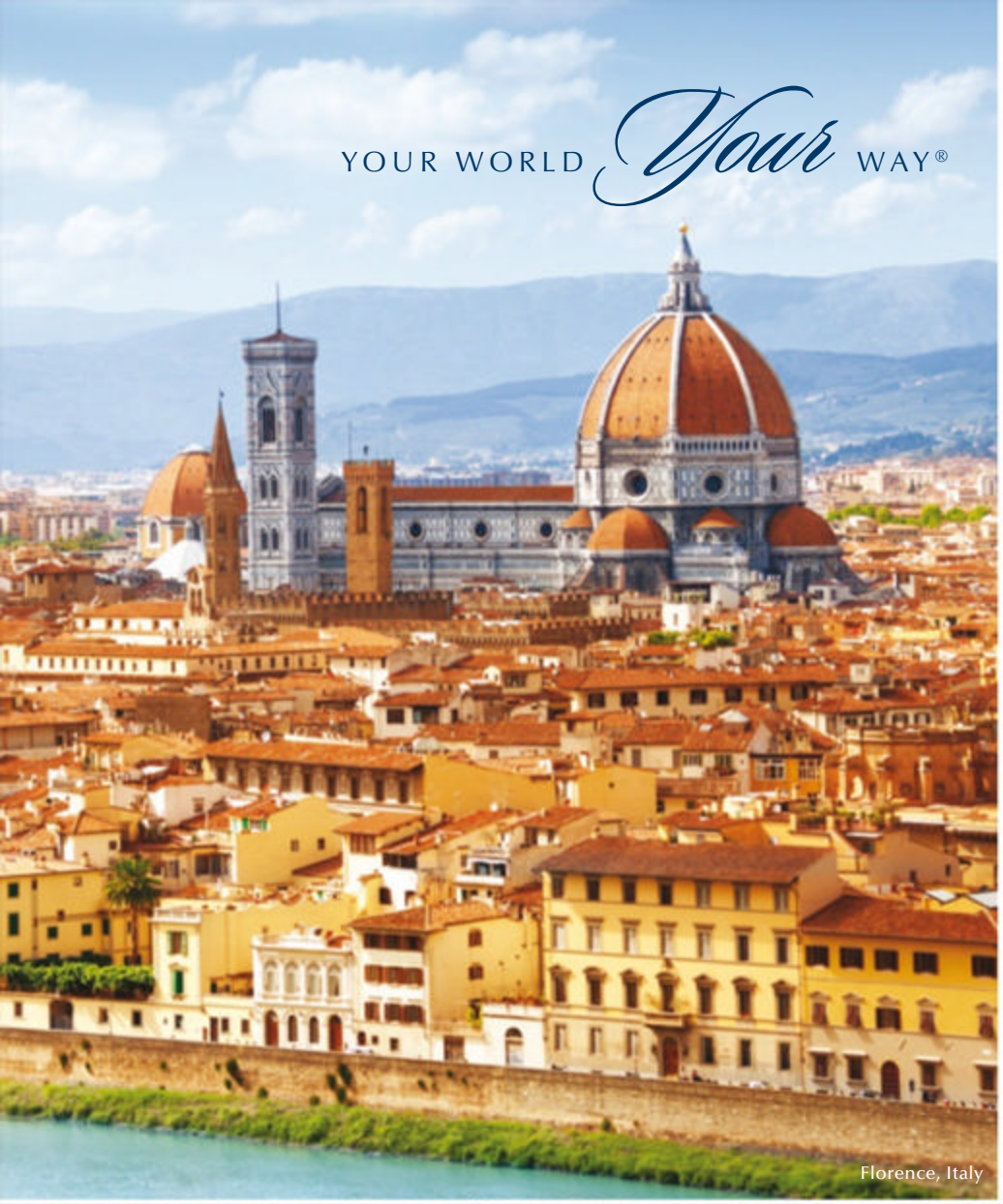
CG I played beach volleyball professionally for six years, and these courts are awesome. They're right off the parking lot, and there's always a game going. Super fun. You play a game and you don't realize you're burning calories. It's a way to get an instant dose of nature and serenity when surrounded by the bustle of the city.

Venice Beach



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: DAVE LAURIDSEN, LISA CORSON, BRANDON FRIEND-SOLIS

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1

DISCOVER


2

1. Boarding time at the Niles Canyon Railway. **2.** Old Canyon Road Bridge. **3.** Tyme for Tea sets out the good china. **4.** At The Vine, the party's on the patio. **5.** The Vine's seasonal mussels and frites.


3


4


5

A PERFECT DAY IN

FREMONT'S NILES DISTRICT

Enjoy small-town pleasures, silent-film legends, and the romance of the rails in this little-known East Bay enclave. *By Kristina Malsberger*

A ride with all the bells and whistles

In 1869, America's first transcontinental railroad rumbled through the narrows of Niles Canyon, carrying passengers and freight from the distant eastern seaboard to San Francisco Bay. Now the heritage **Niles Canyon Railway** chugs 13 miles along this original canyon route, over truss bridges and past hillsides speckled with spring wildflowers. Train geeks swoon over vintage steam and diesel engines from across the West, while kids get a kick out of ticket-punching conductors, all local volunteers. For more locomotive lore, the **Niles Depot Museum** houses early telegraph machines, semaphore signals, even an N-scale model railroad that captures the neighborhood in miniature. *Niles Canyon Railway: $12; ncry.org. Depot Museum: $2 donation suggested; nilesdepot.org.*

Take home a classic

Impulse buys are half the fun of strolling Fremont's Niles

Photographs by DAVID FENTON



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GETTING HERE
Fremont lies 35 miles southeast of San Francisco. From I-880 south, exit at Alvarado-Niles Rd. and continue east 6 miles to the town plaza.

District, a four-block stretch on the north side of town with 17 antiques and collectibles stores. The prettiest, **Les Belles Antiques**, feels like a flapper's boudoir. Find everything from Limoges porcelain to Victorian chromolithographs to a $12,000 French vitrine. The frills continue at **Tyme for Tea & Co.**, a combination antiques shop and tearoom. Borrow a fancy hat and settle in for scones and sandwiches, served Mad Hatter–style on mismatched bone china. *Les Belles: 37549 Niles Blvd.; lesbellesantiques.blogspot.com. Tyme for Tea: 37501 Niles Blvd.; tymefortea.com.*

Bike to the bay

The paved **Alameda Creek Regional Trail** runs 12 carless miles to the tidal marshes of Don Edwards San Francisco Bay Wildlife Refuge. Cyclists can spot egrets and jackrabbits. Near the bay, the breeze picks up, carrying the cries of migrating shorebirds. Look for tiny red-necked phalaropes foraging for brine shrimp, and American white pelicans flying in tight formation. From the water's edge, the Bayview Trail loop continues 3.5 miles through the rolling hills of Coyote Creek Regional Park, home to Ohlone shell mounds and a wooden boardwalk that zigzags through the cattails. *ebparks.org/parks/trails/alameda_creek.*

Hollywood north

Tinseltown was just a twinkle in 1912, the year cowboy movie star "Broncho Billy" Anderson arrived in Niles. Soon his silent-film crew was cranking out two movies a week, mostly westerns shot in scenic Niles Canyon. "They made over 350 films in four years," marvels David Kiehn, historian at the **Niles Essanay Silent Film Museum**. Photos show a young Charlie Chaplin, who made five films in town. Hand-crank a 100-year-old movie camera or peek into the Edison Theatre's original projection booth, lined with tin as a precaution against highly flammable nitrate film. At Saturday screenings, Chaplin, Laurel & Hardy, and others flicker to life in the century-old theater, spurred on by live piano accompaniment. *Donation suggested; Sat–Sun only; 37417 Niles Blvd.; nilesfilmmuseum.org.*

BY THE NUMBERS

$1,250 | *Charlie Chaplin's weekly salary in 1915 while filming in Niles*


6


7


8

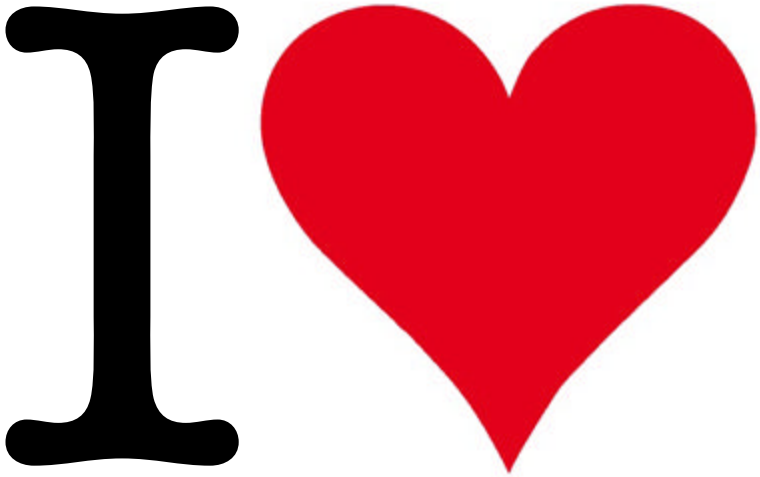

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6. The converted baggage car on the Niles Canyon Railway. **7.** Risotto with local vegetables at The Vine. **8.** Art deco abounds at Les Belles Antiques. **9.** Niles Essanay Silent Film Museum.

Casual fare with flair

Three years ago, childhood friends Margo Cristein and Annie Wood recognized a gap in Niles's culinary scene and opened **The Vine**. "We brought a little funky edge to a neighborhood that was very antique," Cristein says. Today, locals line up for Sunday brunch favorites like Nutella-stuffed Texas toast and the Guava Mama—a mimosa made with guava juice and fresh mint. The blackened salmon BLT is a dinner highlight, as is the hyper-local wine menu. "Livermore Valley is just over the hills," explains Cristein. Grab a glass and head to the back patio, where heat lamps, blankets, and a convivial firepit keep the conversation flowing year-round. *$$; 37533 Niles Blvd.; thevineinniles.com.*

MAP: MARGARET SLOAN



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WANDERLUST

BIRDS OF PARADISE

Kauai, famous for emerald rain forests and precipitous coastal cliffs, is also the world capital of endangered birds. *Bill Donahue* plunges into the tropical wilderness to see what he can find.

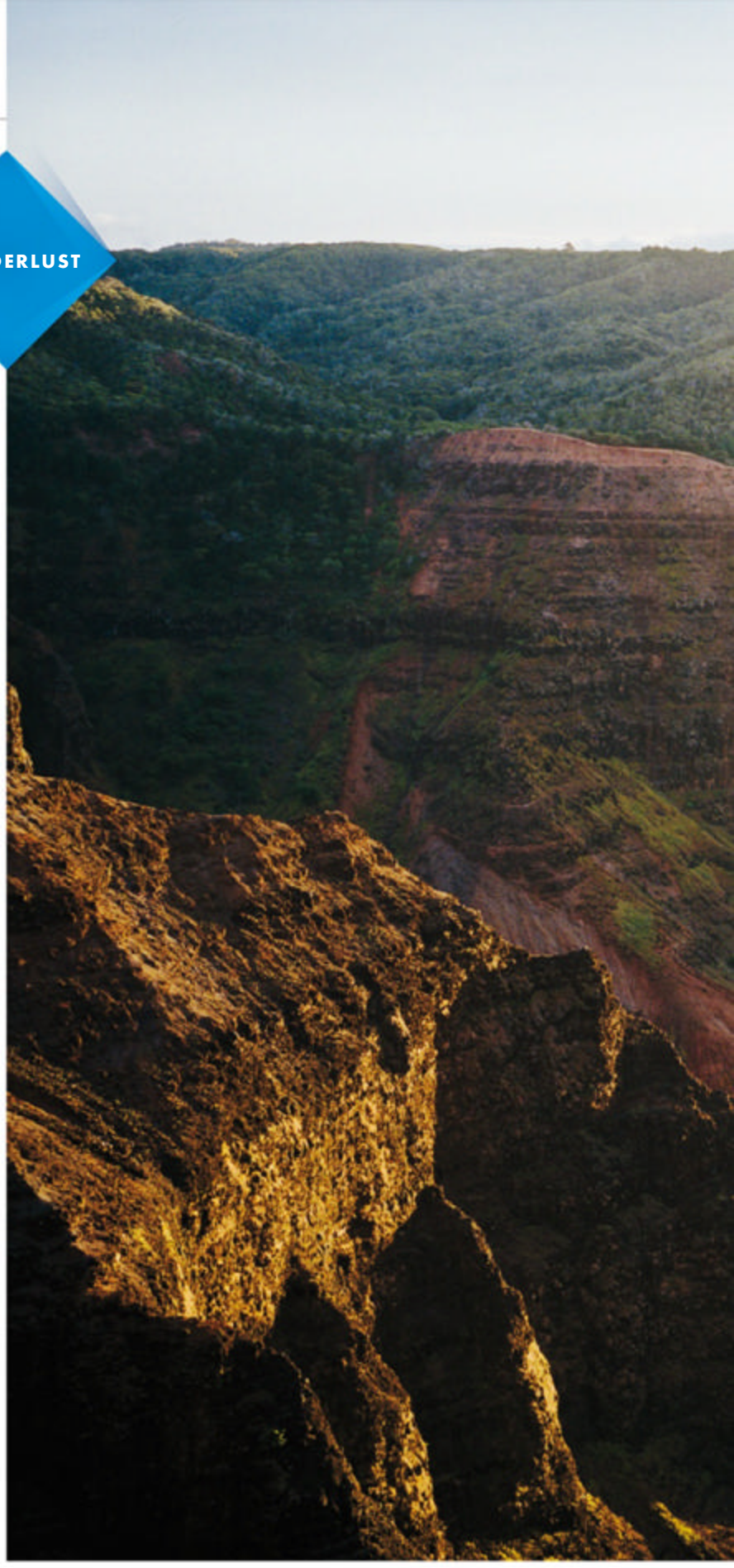
CONSIDER THE 'AKIKIKI. Gray-feathered, with a grayish white chest and bright, beady black eyes, it is an extremely small bird, weighing just 12 to 17 grams, or roughly as much as a Kennedy half-dollar. Deemed critically endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, it is found only on Kauai, the oldest, westernmost of Hawaii's six major islands. Indeed, on Kauai it is isolated to a 14-square-mile patch within the island's high-elevation Alakai Swamp, where it feeds on tiny bugs living on the branches of native 'ohi'a trees.

In one of the very few 'akikiki videos ever recorded, you can watch the bird foraging, pecking its slender pink beak at the bark, eyeballing the next knob, then moving on. It relocates roughly one time every second, and its movements are so flickering that the film has the stop-motion quality of early Hollywood movies.

There are only about 450 to 500 'akikiki left in the world, down from about 3,880 in 2008, thanks to deforestation, introduced predators, and avian malaria. If you want to see the bird, you need to go where the mosquitoes aren't, which is high in the mountains. So right now, on a sunny September morning, I'm thrashing my way through a thicket of blackberry brambles in the center of Kauai, along the 4-mile Mohihi-Waialae Trail that will lead me into the roadless "swamp," which is actually a bog.

"You're good," conservation biologist Lisa "Cali" Crampton cries back to me. "You've almost got it."

The project leader for the Kauai Forest Birds Recovery Project, Crampton spends many days in the office, crunching bird data. Still, I am clearly the outsider here, the amateur. →



Kauai: "A billion places for a bird to hide."

Photographs by KAMIL BIALOUS







From left: The ‘amakihi, puaiohi, and ‘elepaio.

I am basically swimming in thorns and, for reasons having to do with my own idiocy, I am wearing shorts. The bushes scrape and claw at my skin, but then after a minute I emerge in the clear, with the forest around me so dense and so green it seems, almost, to be singing.

I’M HERE ON KAUAI because it is, by many measures, the world capital of endangered birds. In addition to the ‘akikiki, two other forest species, the ‘akeke‘e and the puaiohi, sit on the federal list of endangered or threatened species, along with two seabirds—the Newell’s shearwater and Hawaiian petrel, both found in Kauai and endemic to Hawaii. Each of the five birds is specifically adapted to stay afloat in its ecosystem. For example, the tiny ‘akeke‘e has a beak with billtips that cross, making it adept at gnawing and tearing apart the leaf buds of the ‘ohi‘a. But the ‘akeke‘e is vulnerable to avian malaria (which does not affect humans); it has seen a 90 percent plunge in its numbers over the last decade.

The ‘akeke‘e has a backstory that likely would have excited Charles Darwin: About 5.7 million years ago, a single species of finch landed on this newly formed volcanic isle. Then, through a process called adaptive radiation, that finch’s progeny diversified, evolving varying beaks and bodies in response to the challenges of their respective ecosystems. More than 50 species of honeycreeper, including the ‘akikiki and the ‘akeke‘e, evolved from that one ancestor, and they morphed with little impediment. Hawaii is the most remote archipelago on the planet, and until very recently the birds on Kauai had no predators. There were no humans, no pigs, no foxes, no wolves—in fact, no mammals at all.

The last few centuries have been different. The Polynesians brought rats when they arrived in Hawaii around A.D. 400; it’s possible they killed and ate Kauai’s large, flightless birds. Women in the 1930s started the Hui Manu (Help the Birds) Society, using the proceeds from garden tours to import non-native songbirds like the Japanese white-eye to the islands. Pigs, rats, and feral cats—a nasty trio of predators—now abound. Meanwhile, climate change has brought in warmer air. Mosquitoes are suddenly common; many native birds have no defense.

At least five endemic Kauai forest birds have gone extinct over the past 30 years. So as I range around the island, searching for birds with two very different biologists, an exquisite melancholy tugs at me. I know I might never make such a visit again.

AFTER WE GET OUT of the blackberries, Crampton draws a long, slender, dumbbell-shaped map in my notebook. “This is the Alakai,” she explains, noting that its rainiest and most weed-free and bird-dense section is east. Crampton and I are hiking east. We scale a ladderlike pitch that looks out onto fog-shrouded peaks, and when we get to the top I feel a certain euphoria: the joy that comes from being in a beautiful place, breathing hard, in sync with the green, breathing forest. Crampton is at peace too. As we sit down on a bench, she says that whenever she comes out into the forest (to trap birds to band and release them), the doom that shadows her office days, spent too often amid grisly extinction numbers, fades. “I think, Yes, the swamp is persisting,” she says. “I’m doing my job, the birds are doing their job. The ‘for now’ part of it slips away and everything just is.”

On a recent outing, Crampton tells me, she and her crew happened to camp within earshot of a nesting male bird, an endangered puaiohi who distinguished himself from other puaiohi by singing at dusk. “He had this beautiful call,” she says, “fluting and haunting, not sad. It was like hearing taps at summer camp, and it made you feel connected to the rhythms of the swamp. You could tell, listening, that this one bird had been singing at evening forever.”

I’d read about the puaiohi beforehand, and its scant guidebook profile had somehow made it my favorite Kauai bird—there was no way I was not going to get the puaiohi ringtone on my iPhone. I was also captivated by its delightfully Seussian, nearly unpronounceable name (poo-eye-*o*-hee) and also its sheer oddness. The puaiohi nests exclusively on fern-covered cliff faces beside ravines in the Alakai. It is a bird with curious, not-entirely-understood survival skills.

In 1996, the puaiohi was seemingly close to extinction. There were just 200 or so left. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, with other groups, launched a captive breeding project aimed at nothing less than preventing the species from becoming extinct. Subsequently operated by San Diego Zoo Global, the program raised some 292 puaiohi in large pens and released 222 into the wild. Only one of these birds is known to have produced young in more than one season. And yet, as other Kauai endemics have struggled, the puaiohi has remained stable, perhaps because it can often endure mosquito bites without getting malaria. There are now nearly 500 puaiohi. “It’s a survivor, that bird,” Crampton says.

I want to see one. I know it will be difficult, for the puaiohi sings less outside its breeding season, which runs from March to July, and its nests are so deep in ravines that researchers often rappel in. Still, as we come around a bend, Crampton points to a small divot in the ferns next to the trail. “That’s where a puaiohi pair nested last year,” she says. There is a scattering of sticks from the decayed nest and even a couple of tiny feathers. But the birds are gone. →

JIM DENNY (3)



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On Pihea Trail, Cali Crampton scans for birds.

LOOKING FOR ENDANGERED BIRDS on Kauai can be difficult. Often, you find traces or clues but not the bird itself, and you're left with the sense that, even though it covers just 552 square miles, Kauai is vast, almost infinite, with billions of places for a bird to hide.

One morning, I join André Raine, the project coordinator for the Kauai Endangered Seabird Recovery Project, to search for nests belonging to the Newell's shearwater, a diving seabird that feeds on squid in the Pacific before flying in at night to burrow on Kauai's steep, highly vegetated rock faces. Raine and I meet in the mountains, at the Puʻu o Kila Lookout in Kauai's Kokeʻe State Park, and begin hiking the Pihea Trail, which meanders beside an almost sheer face that drops to the Pacific, 4,000 feet below.

Raine is 40 and lanky, with the crisp accent of his native Bermuda, and an austere, unflappable manner. In his previous job, as the conservation manager for BirdLife Malta in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, he was shot at by incensed hunting advocates. "It was a little disturbing," he tells me.

After maybe 30 minutes, we wriggle off the trail, onto a makeshift path used by Raine and his team of 14 researchers when they band and monitor shearwaters and petrels. Sometimes we scramble down steep slopes, sometimes we climb with our hands. Raine speaks of going out for 16-hour days here. "You get up at 3:30," he says with delight, "and then you do a two-hour survey, nap for a bit, and wake up again at 7 and look at birds all day, in the rain and in the undergrowth, before a night survey. Yeah, it tires you out. And it feels good."

We get to a turn and see—well, not a shearwater, but a hole that has been dug up. Raine presses his nose to it, detective-like. "There's a musty, salty smell, so yes, it was a bird's burrow," he says. It's been invaded by a predator. "It could have been a cat," Raine says. "It could've been a pig." He scans the trail. "Oh, here we go. Some feathers. It's a Hawaiian petrel. It's a juvenile. An adult wouldn't have feathers like this. It was probably a cat. A pig would have crunched it up more."

About 50 yards later, we're on a ridge that's as thin as a knife's edge and I can see the water foaming as it heaves into the rocks far below. Very carefully I sit down on my butt and crab and shimmy my way to safety. On the way back to the car, Raine says, "This is where we send crew people at the beginning, so they can warm up for the harder areas."

It's as though someone has pried off the back of a Swiss watch, giving me a glimpse of nature's inner workings.

THE HIKE WITH CALI CRAMPTON is a lot easier. At first, the trailside is a sea of ginger. But eventually, the path levels off and gives way to a nearly flat, forested plateau where the soft ground under the trees is wide open and has no weeds. Crampton and I sit down to eat lunch, and for a half-hour just watch birds dart about in the high branches. I see an ʻakikiki hopping along the branch. There are myriad ʻiʻiwi, a long-billed red honeycreeper whose cry (ee-*ee*-we) sounds like a rusty gate, and I hear the whistling song of another endemic, the ʻelepaio, which is everywhere as I train my binoculars on—wait, is that the smallest of the endemic honeycreepers, the ʻanianiau? Yes, the yellow-breasted ʻanianiau, with gray

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in its tail feathers. Each of the tiny birds above me is busy about its work, determined. Watching, I feel as though someone has pried off the back of a Swiss watch, giving me a glimpse of nature's intricate inner workings.

"The closest a puaiohi would get is the edge of the ridge," Crampton says.

We wait. No puaiohi comes, but by now that hardly matters: I've slipped into the puaiohi's world for a few hours. And it is almost gratifying that the puaiohi has made itself scarce. It is a wild bird; it is not out here to sing and dance for tourists like me.

As Crampton and I hike out, we pass a host of orange rattraps her crews have attached to tree trunks to reduce predation. Nearby, Hawaii's Division of Forestry and Wildlife is completing a couple of fences that will keep pigs out of parts of the Alakai. Still, when we get to the edge of the cliff, Crampton says, woefully, "Any one of these birds could just shoot right down there, 1,500 feet below, and then they're in Mosquitoville."

She speculates about what might be done to save the honeycreepers from malaria. "There's some evidence that one bird, the 'amakihi, has developed a resistance on the Big Island," she says, "and maybe what we do is find the gene that enables resistance and then breed birds that would be resistant too. It's an extreme measure, I know, but we have an extreme situation."

I GO OUT BIRDING just one more time. On André Raine's advice, I hike the easy part of the Pihea Trail again—alone this time, roughly a half-hour after nightfall, in hopes that I can hear seabirds flying in through the darkness. Raine has told me how to listen for the braying donkey cry of the shearwater and the *oo-wa-oo* song of the Hawaiian petrel, but when I first get out on the rocks near Kalalau Valley, it is so windy that all I can hear are crickets and the wind.

I walk maybe a mile along the edge of the cliff, then find a rocky nook in some bushes by the rim, so that I can see a few other nearby crags illuminated by the nearly full moon. I wait. Is it too late? Have the birds already slipped in quietly?

I keep waiting—45 minutes, an hour. The wind blows, the crickets chirp. The bushes scrape at my legs as I sit on the rock. Nothing happens: No birds, no other people come by. All I can see below is the ocean, no lights. I watch the waves crash at the rocks. I'm on an ancient, almost secret part of the island, it seems. In the place where I'm sitting, almost nothing has changed for centuries. In that alone, there is hope.

WORTHY BIRDS

Dedicated birders will travel the globe to spot elusive species, but you don't have to leave the West for a rare encounter of the bird kind.

CALIFORNIA CONDOR

PINNACLES NATIONAL PARK, CA Visitors to the Pinnacles campground can use the park's spotting scopes to search for these highly endangered raptors, whose recovery story is as impressive as their 9-foot wingspan. *nps.gov/pinn.*

GREATER SAGE-GROUSE

DUBOIS, ID Every April, tour buses take birders out to a prairie dance floor where overinflated male grouse strut, preen, and shimmy in front of mostly disinterested females. *grousedays.org.*

MARBLED MURRELET

REDWOOD NATIONAL PARK, CA A speckled seabird may seem out of place in the giant trees, but murrelets forgo the shore to nest here from March to September. Watch them dart through open meadows early in the morning. *nps.gov/redw.*

MOUNTAIN PLOVER

KARVAL, CO Despite its name, this ground bird prefers the flatlands, notably the cattle-grazing land around Karval, home of a Mountain Plover Festival each April. *karval.org.*

ELEGANT TROGON

MADERA CANYON, AZ In spring, bird-watchers flock to the Santa Rita Mountains for a glimpse of the colorful (and aptly named) quetzal relative. *friendsofmaderacanyon.org.*

WHITE-TAILED PTARMIGAN

GRINNELL GLACIER TRAIL, GLACIER NATIONAL PARK, MT These high-mountain ground-dwellers show little fear of humans, but you'll still likely need persistence and luck to spot one. *gnpbirds.net.*

—Chris Woolston



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Home & Garden



SPRING
PLANTING GUIDE

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Fresh ways to combine no-fuss shrubs, perennials, and grasses

Pretty tough
LANDSCAPING WITH SUCCULENTS
p. 42

Photograph by **BRET GUM**

As *Sunset* garden editors, we love getting in the dirt—the planting and digging, even the pruning and weeding. But sometimes we want to take a set-it-and-forget-it approach. That was the impetus behind our newest book, the *Sunset Western Garden Book of Easy-Care Plantings*. It's full of projects and tips for landscaping with water-wise plants that practically take care of themselves. Here are some of our favorite ideas from the book—try plantings that suit your region, then enjoy (and ignore) them all year long. *By Kathleen N. Brenzel*



1

USE STAR-POWER SHRUBS

Tough shrubs bring color to this border in *Sunset's* Test Garden in Menlo Park, California. The plants, which thrive on little summer water and require no irrigation in winter, include variegated *Cistus corbariensis* 'Little Miss Sunshine', flecked with white blooms; bronze-tinged *Abelia* 'Kaleidoscope'; and red-tinged *Nandina domestica* 'Obsession', fringed with cool blue fescue (*Festuca glauca* 'Beyond Blue'). Across the path, a plum-hued *Loropetalum chinense* 'Purple Pixie' grows beside lime *Carex oshimensis* 'Everillo' and potted 'Lemon-Lime' nandinas.

2

EMBRACE REPETITION

Low-water plants with strong silhouettes often look their best in multiples. Here, fanlike Mexican tree ocotillos *(Fouquieria macdougalii)* serve as a backdrop for equally spaced agaves (*Agave* 'Blue Glow') and low chartreuse *Sedum rupestre* 'Angelina'. **DESIGN:** Daniel Nolan; *floragrubb.com*.





3

CREATE A DESERT IN A BOWL

For a patio table centerpiece, fill a straight-sided ceramic bowl—this one is about 11 inches in diameter and 4½ inches deep—with fast-draining cactus mix, then loosely arrange little barrel cactus *(Echinocactus grusonii)* and tuck clusters of tiny white-spined thimble cactus *(Mammillaria gracilis)* around them. Finish with a mulch of black pebbles. **DESIGN:** Lauren Dunec Hoang.

4

BUILD A STUMPERY

With its mossy tree stumps and fern-covered logs, this Vashon Island, Washington, garden (opposite) looks like it was lifted intact from a Northwest rain forest. But it's a stumpery—similar to a rock garden, but built with tree parts. Owners Pat and Walt Riehl brought in madrone and Douglas fir stumps from construction sites on the island, which fern expert Martin Rickard placed among existing trees. Then they added tree ferns *(Dicksonia antarctica)*, spotted may apple (*Podophyllum* 'Spotty Dotty'), and *Tolmiea menziesii*. Call it recycling, nature-style.

FROM LEFT: THOMAS J. STORY, CAITLIN ATKINSON, THOMAS J. STORY, TERRY DONNELLY


SPRING
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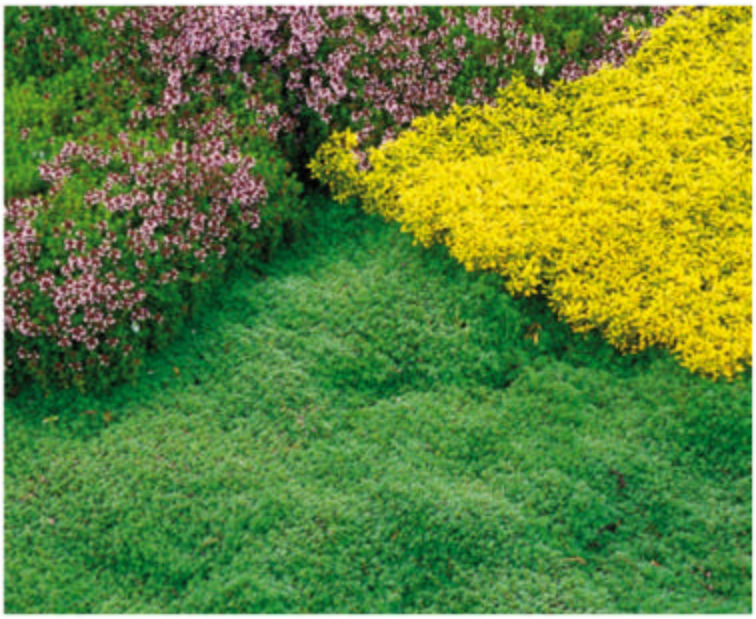


FROM LEFT: MICHAEL WOODALL; SAXON HOLT/PHOTOBOTANIC; JOSHUA McCULLOUGH; PHYTOPHOTO; JERRY PAVIA

5

GET GRAPHIC WITH HERBS

To create living geometry in your garden, combine several kinds of edible groundcovers, then let them ramble together. Here, a triangle of woolly thyme *(Thymus serpyllum)* angles up to a pink-flowered thyme and a golden oregano.





7

CONTRAST FOLIAGE

It's a foolproof approach to border design: Pair plants—one tall, one short—in contrasting colors. Here, a purple fountain grass (*Pennisetum x advena* 'Rubrum') rises behind chartreuse Japanese forest grass (*Hakonechloa macra* 'Aureola').

6

SET THE STAGE WITH COLOR

Paint a wall in a bright color, then select plants bold enough to stand up to it. In this Phoenix garden, tall *Cereus peruvianus* fans out against a tomato red wall. Blue agaves *(Agave ovatifolia)*, feathery grasses, and a mound of *Dalea capitata* round out the planting. **DESIGN:** Chad Robert, landscape architect; *exteriors-cr.com*.



8

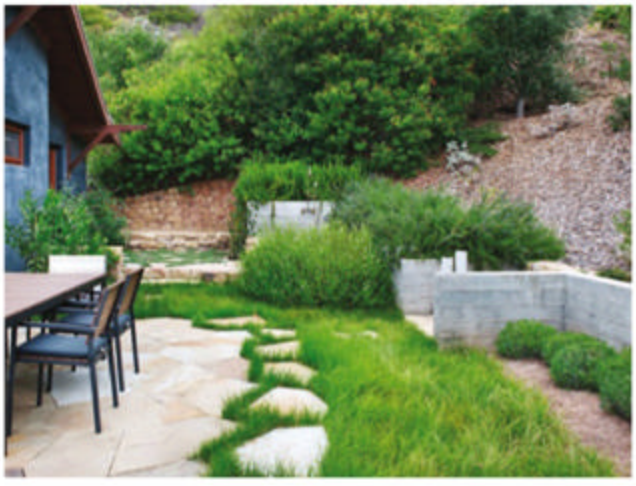
HANG AIR PLANTS

Don't let tillandsias just linger on your desk. Attached to the tails of Spanish moss (another kind of air plant) and draped over a branch, they become art. **DESIGN:** Dustin Gimbel; *second naturegarden design.com*.



9 GROW A ROOM DIVIDER

A border of drought-tolerant plants visually separates a paved patio from a firepit area in this West Hollywood garden. In the center, a blue-green Weber agave *(Agave weberi)* mimics a cooling fountain above blue *Senecio mandraliscae;* smaller fox tail agaves *(Agave attenuata)* grow at left, along with kangaroo paws (*Anigozanthos* 'Orange Cross') and *Echeveria* 'Afterglow'. **DESIGN:** Eric Brandon Gomez; *ericbrandongomez.com*.



10 BLUR BOUNDARIES

If it weren't for the tracery of California field sedge *(Carex praegracilis)* stitching together the patio and mini meadow, this chaparral-scented garden in Montecito, California, might look as though planted by nature. But it's a richly textured complement to the surrounding Santa Barbara foothills. The sedge meadow can be mowed to look like a lawn yet needs less water. **DESIGN:** Susan Van Atta, landscape architect; *va-la.com*.

OUR NEW BOOK

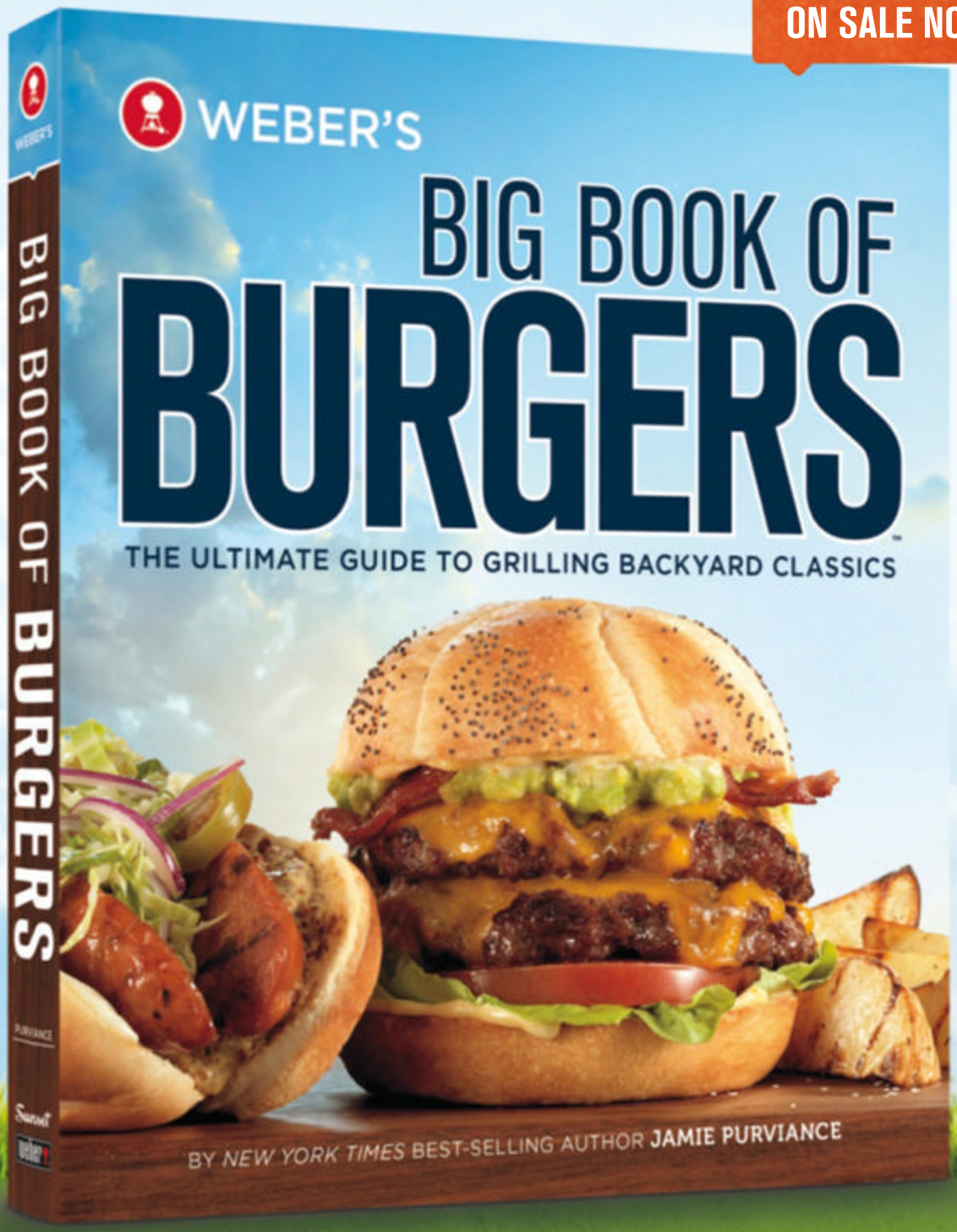


Find hundreds of design tips in the *Sunset Western Garden Book of Easy-Care Plantings* ($25), out in April. Learn more: *sunset.com/easycarebook*.

FROM TOP: ERIC BRANDON GOMEZ, ANDREA JONES/GARDEN EXPOSURES

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Inside the box

SMALL SPACE BIG DREAMS

For five years, Erin Feher Montoya and her husband, Danny, relished the one-bedroom apartment they shared in San Francisco's Tenderloin District. Then they had a daughter. Instead of fleeing for the suburbs, they tweaked their compact setup to make room for three. If you can hang a shelf, you can borrow their small-space solutions for your home.



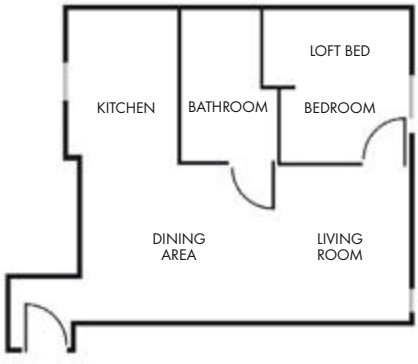




THOMAS J. STORY (4)







6 SPACE-STRETCHING TACTICS

1. ADD ANOTHER LEVEL
To double the square footage of their bedroom, Danny, a professional woodworker, built a sleeping loft accessed by a ladder. The crib for 1½-year-old Orion, also designed by Danny, has storage bins below.

2. USE LINES STRATEGICALLY
Striped wallpaper along the underside of the loft and the back of the cubbies coordinates the space. Danny made a zigzagging shelf so the nursery feels like a distinct space. "Boxes and straight lines work for us since we're both a bit type A and crave organization," says Erin, an editor for the parenting website Red Tricycle. *Gradient wallpaper, $50/roll; graham brown.com.*

3. SOAR WITH INDUSTRIAL SHELVING
The kitchen is outfitted with adjustable shelves, commonly used in restaurants. The open shelving emphasizes the loft's 12-foot-high ceilings. With no cabinets, "we're forced to be extra organized and not bring home too much stuff," says Erin. *Custom system from $800; e-zshelving.com.*

4. STORE IN UNLIKELY SPOTS
Next to the sofa, the deep windowsill holds a bar, a garden box of succulents, and a revolving gallery of Danny's prototypes. A pair of flip-top boxes store guest linens and magazines, and sub in for a coffee table.

5. WORK THE WALLS
Most of the family's books are stored in a series of floating boxes designed by Danny, which have a much lighter look than a large free-standing bookcase. A library ladder allows access to the highest boxes.

6. DEFINE AREAS WITH OVERSCALE ART
A wall installation of vintage keys sets off the dining area from the rest of the apartment. Danny, whose business is called Key&Kite in honor of Benjamin Franklin's legendary electrical experiment, bought a bag full of keys from eBay to create it.
–Lydia W. Lee

DIGITAL BONUS
Find our complete guide to small-space design at *sunset.com/smallspace*.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Your CHECKLIST



"The mix of materials—dark granite, buff pebbles, red pavers—adds rich texture."

JOHANNA SILVER, ASSOCIATE GARDEN EDITOR



GARDEN WE LOVE

Water works

This Santa Fe backyard was designed around a simple showpiece: a recirculating fountain, made from a slightly indented wheel of granite. Monika Hellwegen and Azul Cobb, of landscape design firm Carlotta from Paradise *(505/690-6916)*, place a water feature in nearly every garden they build. "It's similar to a fireplace; it makes you want to stop, rest, and stay awhile," says Hellwegen. But the homeowners aren't the only beneficiaries—birds flock each morning to sip and splash in the shallow water. Semicircular planting beds give a sense of enclosure to the oasis.

PLANT

In a sunny part of your garden, plant Asian herbs like flowering Chinese leek, shiso, and Thai basil. Good sources: Ever Green Seeds *(evergreenseeds.com)* and Kitazawa Seed Company *(kitazawaseed.com)*.

Once all risk of frost has passed, plant subtropicals, including angel's trumpet, canna, ginger lily *(Alpinia)*, and mandevilla.

Soften borders by tucking in some low, mounding plants, such as catmint, *Sanvitalia*, and sweet alyssum.

For summer flowers that attract bees, sow seeds of cosmos, marigolds, nasturtiums, sunflowers, and zinnias.

MAINTAIN

Prep beds for planting by turning over the soil and digging in at least 4 inches of compost.

Feed citrus trees with a granular citrus fertilizer according to box instructions.

Pull weeds while the ground is moist and roots slip out of the soil easily.

To save water, invest in a smart controller that adjusts irrigation levels according to weather conditions. Smart controllers are available through most landscape-supply stores and Rain Bird *(rainbird.com)*.

HARVEST

Continue picking the outer leaves of chard, collards, kale, and mustard greens. Pinch off any bloom spikes to keep leaves coming.

GO

Stroll the paths of the San Francisco Botanical Garden to see 100 magnolias covered with saucer-size white and pink flowers. *Free for S.F. residents, $7 nonresidents; at Golden Gate Park, Ninth Ave. at Lincoln Way; sfbotanicalgarden.org.*

Visit the San Francisco Flower & Garden Show to check out idea-packed show gardens and seminars. *$18 before Mar 9, $22 at the door; Mar 18–22; at San Mateo County Event Center, 1346 Saratoga Dr., San Mateo; sfgardenshow.com.*

What grows in your climate zone? Find out at *sunset.com/zonefinder*.

JEN JUDGE

Reported by LAUREN DUNEC HOANG & JOHANNA SILVER

In the Western HOME

TIPS FROM OUR TEAM

WESTERN MADE

CUPS NEVER LOOKED SO GOOD

From Portland—the home of craft beer, cider, spirits, coffee, you name it—comes Mazama Wares. The ceramics company's drinking vessels, from mugs to cocktail tumblers, are each thrown by hand and finished with an unglazed base trim. This year, Mazama Wares debuted the large Crater cappuccino mug (below, named after Oregon's Crater Lake). More into making than drinking? Don't miss the addictive *@shopmazama* feed on Instagram for on-the-pottery-wheel videos. *$42; shopmazama.com.*





"Black paint ups the cool factor of these mismatched antique chairs."

JOANNA LINBERG, HOME EDITOR

IDEA WE LOVE

STOVE ALCOVE

Although we're grateful for modern kitchen innovations—the dishwasher, the wine fridge—we welcome the revival of one Victorian-era feature: the tiled wall alcove. This one, in a space designed by Jessica Helgerson Interior Design *(jhinteriordesign.com),* hides the range hood and gives the kitchen a focal point. "Our clients are enthusiastic cooks," says project manager and designer Mira Eng-Goetz, "so it made sense to let the workspace take center stage."

TIP OF THE MONTH

Do your own dirty work

Remodels eat up cash. One way to economize is to handle any demolition yourself. "If someone has the strength and the will to get dirty, they can usually do it," says Julia Bettencourt, owner of bathroom showroom Plumbed Elegance, in Santa Cruz, California *(plumbedelegance.com).* She saved about $800 on her bathroom redo by tearing out the walls and old fixtures herself (just wear a dust mask when removing insulation).



ASK A DESIGNER

Sleeping in style

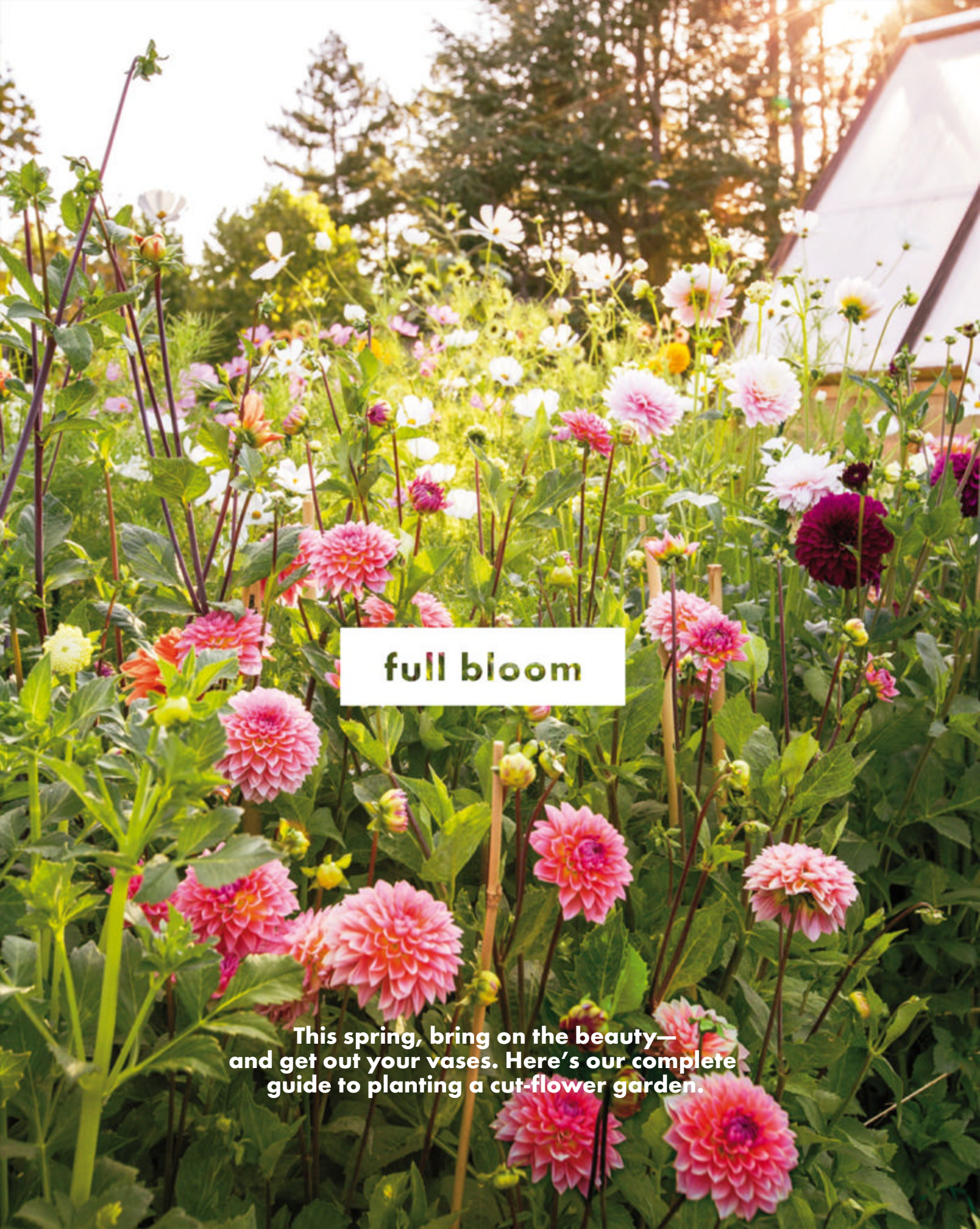
You know how you never want to check out of some hotel rooms? Roman Alonso of Commune (communedesign.com), the design team behind the Ace Hotel Downtown Los Angeles, gives us his tips for bringing that feeling home.

How do you create a relaxed hotel room vibe at home? You want sound quality to be good, meaning quiet—it's part of making the space cozy and warm. At home you can line walls with wood or fabric-covered panels. Drapery helps too.

What's a common mistake in bedroom design? I'm a big believer in having your sleeping area separate from the rest of the room. And it should always be about function first. If an element doesn't have function, it doesn't belong in the room.

How do you warm up a pared-down room? Lighting! You want multiple sources: something overhead for bright light, reading lamps for isolated lighting, and always a diffused light (like the Noguchi lamps at the Ace). It should all be on dimmers so you can create different moods.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: LINCOLN BARBOUR, FRANÇOIS HALARD



full bloom

This spring, bring on the beauty—and get out your vases. Here's our complete guide to planting a cut-flower garden.



In the garden

In one of three cut-flower plots we planted in the *Sunset* Test Garden, bright pink 'Jitterbug', pale pink 'Chilson's Pride', and 'Tiny Treasure' dahlias stand with the help of bamboo stakes. Behind them, wispy Sensation cosmos reach almost 6 feet tall.

In the vase

Our homegrown dahlias were the starting point for this arrangement. Also in the mix are Champagne-colored 'Café au Lait' dahlias, spiky centers of spent coneflowers, and 'Alba' pincushion flowers. 'Green Tails' amaranth spills over the sides, while unripe blackberries and Thai basil sprigs add edible, aromatic touches.

GARDEN DESIGNS BY LAUREN DUNEC HOANG & JOHANNA SILVER | STYLING BY CHRISTINA STEMBEL | PHOTOGRAPHS BY THOMAS J. STORY



Over the years, we've grown everything from heirloom tomatoes to beer hops in the *Sunset* Test Garden. But when garden design assistant Lauren Dunec Hoang started thinking about bouquets for her wedding, we realized it had been decades since we devoted our garden to one very obvious thing: cut flowers.

So we set out to create the ultimate cut-flower garden, one that would provide the blooms for Hoang's wedding and beyond. We started by asking expert growers for their picks. Nicholas Gitts of Oregon's Swan Island Dahlias, for example, recommended the aptly named 'Bride to Be' for its snowy white blooms. Annie Hayes of Annie's Annuals & Perennials in Richmond, California, suggested lime green *Nicotiana langsdorffii,* which can't be found in a typical nursery. "The best way to find amazing cut flowers is to scour seed catalogs or find specialty growers," she says.

After weeks of planning, we settled on not one but three garden plots: one for shade, one for a narrow space, and one as a full-blown "farm." Each takes the guesswork out of bouquet making, with focal points, foliage, and filler flowers growing together. The blooms wound up in the arrangements shown throughout this story, as well as in the bouquet Hoang clutched as she walked down the aisle. The best news: A cut-flower garden is a lesson in abundance. "No matter how many we cut," says Hoang, "there were always more flowers on the way."

For plans and directions, see page 60.

In the garden

In the sunniest part of the Test Garden, we planted long rows of flowers. Beds measure 3 feet wide, keeping the harvest within arm's reach. Far left, the dahlias and cosmos stand tallest. Next to them, nicotiana dangles its lime green bell-shaped flowers. Zinnias burst from the center bed, while to their right is lacy corn cockle, a less-weedy Queen Anne's lace substitute, and lime-leafed feverfew.

In the vase

Zinnias unify this combination, graduating in color from white to lime to coral. They're interspersed with unripe figs and blackberries, white dahlias, mint, Peruvian lilies, holly ferns, and coneflowers in various stages of bloom.





In the garden

The perennial shade garden, opposite, will thrive for years. White *Hydrangea paniculata* shows off in the back. Chinese foxgloves offer oversize digitalis-like blooms in the middle, and mixed varieties of coral bells in front add handsome foliage and delicate pink flowers.

In the vase

The garden gave us everything we needed for this bouquet. The hydrangeas provide shape, while pink flowers and the coral bells' lime green leaves keep the arrangement bright.



DIGITAL BONUS Find sources, even more flower picks, and bouquet inspiration: *sunset.com/cutflowers*.

In the vase

This casual bouquet is like sunshine contained. It features a multicolored 'Autumn Beauty' sunflower, which is surrounded by 'Big Bear' sunflowers, orange Mexican sunflowers, golden sneezeweed, white feverfew, rosemary, and 'Green Tails' amaranth.

In the garden

Sunflowers' skinny habits and varying heights make them a perfect choice for a narrow spot of sun. We planted six varieties in a bed; fluffy 'Big Bear' blossoms are shown opposite.





Lessons from the Test Garden

Our planting plan, plus tips for creating your own backyard cutting garden

Planning

Take stock of your area Pay attention to light needs. "Full sun" means at least six hours of direct sun a day.

Make a mood board Map out a plan that includes bouquet focal points, filler flowers, and foliage.

Consider bloom times To extend the season, choose flowers with early-, mid-, and late-blooming habits. Our feverfew and corn cockle bloomed first, while dahlias and Chinese foxgloves took us well into fall.

Growing

Amend soil Mix 4 to 6 inches of compost into your bed at planting time and rake level.

Water and feed Keep the beds evenly moist while plants are young. Feed every other week with fish emulsion. As plants mature, you can ease up on waterings and feedings.

Stake plants that need it Dahlias and floppy, long-stemmed 'Snowmaiden' pincushion flowers require support. Watch a video of our favorite staking technique at *sunset.com/stakedahlias*.

Harvest regularly Except for the hydrangeas, which bloom only once a year, the flowers in these beds will crank out blossoms until frost if deadheaded regularly.

Arranging

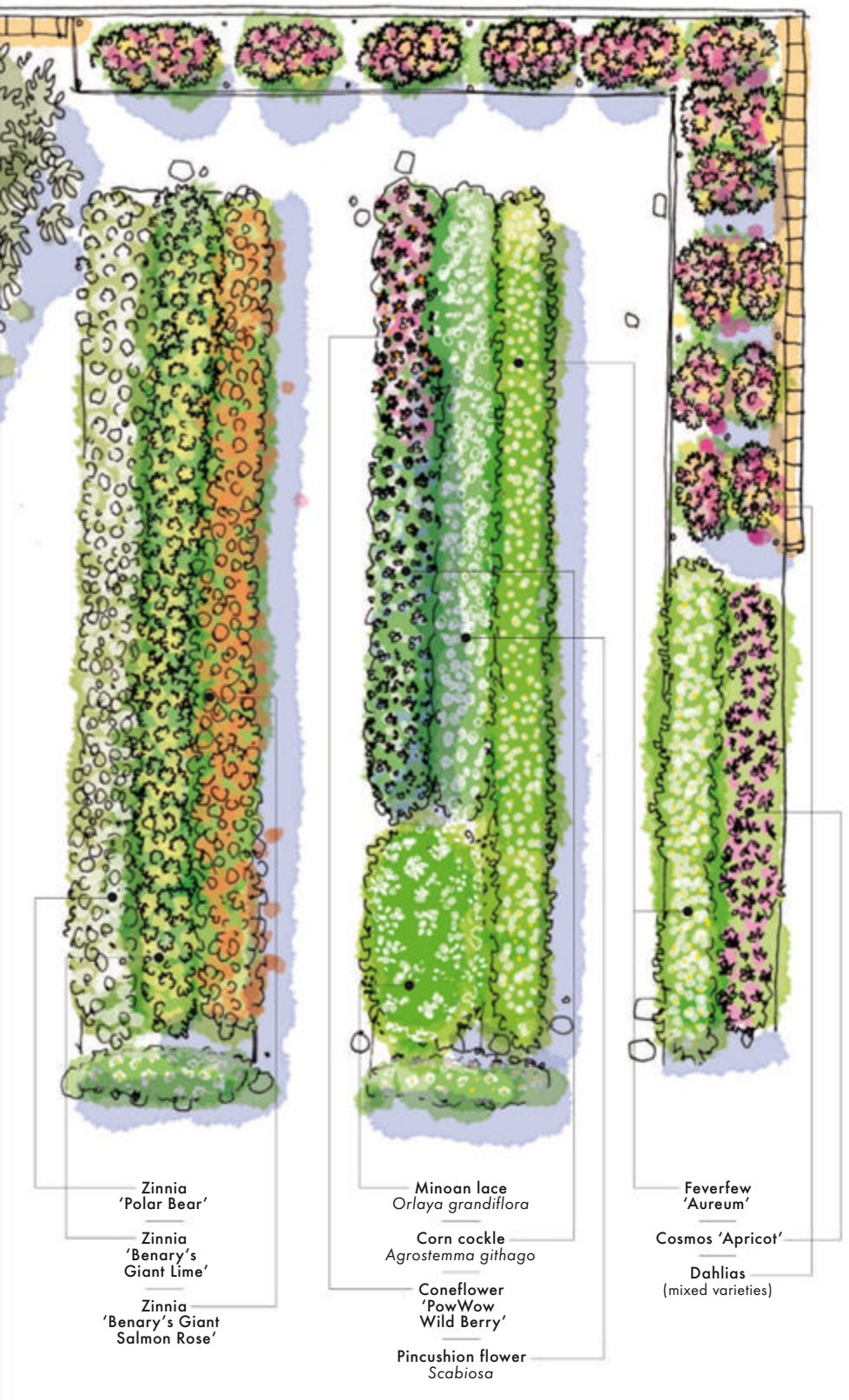
Start with structure You don't need floral foam at the bottom of a vase, but you do need something to hold flowers in place. We begin each arrangement by piling in foliage (pittosporum is a favorite) to support stems.

Use all stages of the flower With a cutting garden, you have access to everything from tight buds to spent blooms, which leads to more creativity in arranging. Get texture and interest by playing with buds and with flower heads whose petals have been removed. Some of these elements (like buds yet to open) will give the bouquet a longer life too.

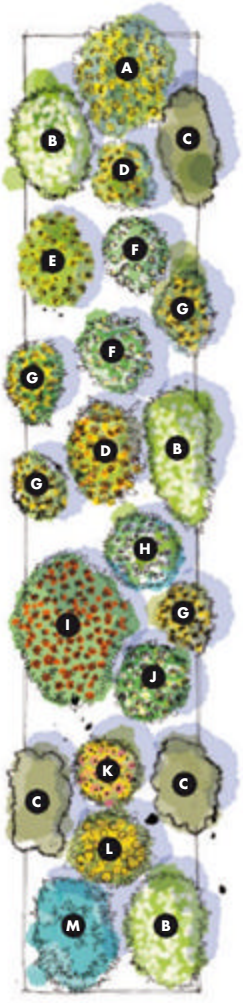
Import if necessary It doesn't make sense to plant a giant eucalyptus tree in your yard just for the silvery blue leaves. But when it comes to flower arranging, that foliage is some of the best around. Forage (where legal) or buy extra materials to get the look you want.



DIMENSIONS Main garden: Beds are 3 feet wide and vary in length from 8 to 18 feet. Sunflower bed: 2 feet wide by 12 feet long. Shade border: 6 feet wide by 13 feet long.



sunflower bed



A
Coreopsis
C. grandiflora

B
Feverfew
'Aureum'

C
Oregano
Origanum vulgare

D
Sunflower
'Music Box'
Helianthus

E
Sneezeweed
'Short 'n' Sassy'
Helenium

F
Sunflower
'Elves Blend'

G
Creeping zinnia
Sanvitalia

H
Sunflower
'Lemon Queen'

I
Mexican sunflower
'Sundance'
Tithonia

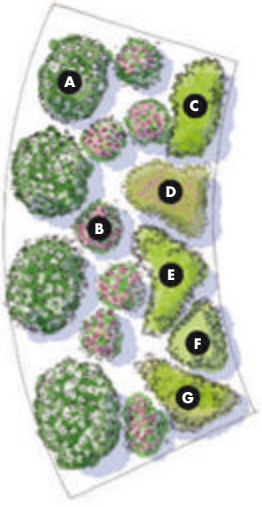
J
Sunflower
'Italian White'

K
Sunflower
'Autumn Beauty'

L
Sunflower
'Big Bear'

M
Amaranth
'Green Tails'

shade border



A
Hydrangea
'Fire Light'
H. paniculata

B
Chinese foxglove
'Rose Glow'
Rehmannia elata

Coral bells
Heuchera:

C
'Havana'

D
'Peppermint Spice'

E
'Lime Marmalade'

F
'Paris'

G
'Lime Ruffles'

Illustrations by CARLO STANGA


MADE
IN
CHINATOWN



Six million people a year sweep through San Francisco's Chinatown. But to truly know what's cooking in this continuously changing neighborhood, you need to see it with an insider. Say hello to Martin Yan.

By
BONNIE TSUI

Photographs by
THOMAS J. STORY

Restaurateur, author, and TV star Martin Yan surveys Chinatown from a balcony on Waverly Place.





FROM LEFT There are more than a dozen murals in San Francisco's Chinatown, many of unknown origin, like this one on Sacramento Street; rows of red lanterns, said to symbolize good fortune, line the streets; Great China Herb Co., curing aches and pains since 1922.

WALKING AROUND WITH MARTIN YAN in San Francisco's Chinatown is kind of like hanging out with the Pope in Rome. Outside a packed neighborhood grocery, one woman's eyes light up. "I just saw you on TV!" she chirps, waving excitedly. Another fan, wife in tow, intercepts us at a crosswalk. "We ate at your new restaurant last week!" he exclaims. When we pause at a butcher shop to examine the roast pork, the store owner points to the faded 15-year-old photo of Yan he has taped in the window. Through it all, Yan makes small talk in English, Cantonese, and Mandarin with equal facility, greeting his audience with his trademark grin.

If you've been without a TV for the past 40 years, you might not be familiar with the phenomenon that is Martin Yan. His show *Yan Can Cook* debuted in 1978, and it immediately took off, introducing Western audiences to Chinese cooking and culture. Yan is renowned for breaking down a chicken in 18 seconds flat (seriously, YouTube it), and fame seemed to come just as quickly. His name is on dozens of cookbooks, restaurants, and cooking shows—Yan has recorded some 3,500 episodes over the years—including an award-winning series on eating in Chinatowns around the world.

I was born the year before *Yan Can Cook*. At the time, Chinese Americans were just starting to become visible in mainstream media and to the country at large. Watching Yan's show gave me a sense of pride and possibility; here was a guy who looked like one of my uncles, and he was on TV! He was funny, beloved.

His path and my family's were parallel. My parents came to this country through New York's Chinatown in the late 1960s—roughly around the same time Yan first arrived in California. As a child, I became absorbed in the rhythms of shopping for groceries and visiting relatives in the neighborhood, where both transactions and conversations were conducted in rapid-fire Cantonese. As an adult, I lived nearby and returned periodically to eat and shop, and to bask in a kind of familial comfort.

When I moved to San Francisco a decade ago, Chinatown was one of my first stops. It was an intriguing window through which to



compare New York with my new West Coast home, a way for me to see how Chinese communities in America could be shaped by the specifics of their surroundings. I was so fascinated by what I found, I wrote a book about it, *American Chinatown: A People's History of Five Neighborhoods.* San Francisco's Chinatown impressed me in particular with its longevity; it has survived since the Gold Rush and railroad years of the mid- to late 19th century, in large part because it is an adaptable community that refuses to be a relic.

There are few better guides to this neighborhood than Martin Yan. When he first arrived from China, by way of Canada, Yan found his footing here. When he began teaching a cooking class at the University of California, Davis, he took his students to shop and eat here. He made lifelong friends, business partners, and is still, to this day, deeply connected with the neighborhood. If Chinatown has a cultural ambassador, Yan is it.

ON A WARM WEDNESDAY MORNING, Yan and I meet in Portsmouth Square, the trilevel park that is Chinatown's living room, and watch the scene unfold: kids on the playground, men dealing cards, grandmothers practicing tai chi. "The Chinese love to socialize—you see this all over China, in all the parks," he tells me, observing the women as they glide from one pose to another. "They all exercise. Here in Chinatown, it's the same. They move, stay active."

He looks up at the buildings that surround the square, housing the tongs (family associations) that help new arrivals find jobs and places to live. Many have bunk beds that are rented out to those in need. "That's my last name, Yan—that's my tong," he says. "Sometimes I will go up there and say hello to the elders."

I ask Yan, who has visited Chinatowns everywhere from Yokohama to Toronto, why he thinks San Francisco's holds such a singular place in our imagination. "This is a living community," he answers. "In London or Los Angeles, people don't live in Chinatown, but on the edge. People live here. They're hanging clothes, shopping. It's very densely populated; traditions are maintained."

We're standing amid the throngs on busy Grant Avenue, colorful flags fluttering overhead. Most visitors never get past this




BUDDHA


TSINGTAO
ORIGINAL
CHINESE
NAMTAI




720



For more than 40 years, chef Martin Yan has made himself at home in San Francisco's Chinatown. "This is a living community," he says. "People live here. They're hanging clothes, shopping. It's very densely populated; traditions are maintained."



souvenir-lined main drag, but even here you can feel the thrum of daily life. Newsstands are stocked with Chinese newspapers and magazines; restaurant windows dish out heaping lunch specials for customers to take away. The crowded press of Chinatown is one of my favorite things about the place—the poignant egalitarian humanity that's palpable on sidewalks packed with pedestrians of every age.

We climb the stairs to the top floor of one of Yan's favorite places, the century-old Tin How Temple, which is tucked into a side alley. Incense wafts down as we walk up. *"Zhou sun,"* we greet the man inside. He nods back to us, and we take in the magnificently lighted joss-stick landscape, representing the unspoken wishes of an entire community. Something about the hushed quiet and the incense transports me back to the ancestral grave-sweeping ceremonies I attended as a child. I once feared the seriousness in the faces around me, but now I read the expressions as reverent, respectful. "We used to be at 33 Waverly," the attendant says, nodding down the lane. "After the 1906 earthquake, we moved here. On Chinese New Year, we open at 5 in the morning. At 5 in the evening, people are still coming."

We keep walking, moving through the history of the neighborhood. Yan notes the Chinese opera clubs and kung fu studios, and a baroque, brick-lined building erected in 1919 that flies competing Chinese and Taiwanese flags. But make no mistake: It's also a walk through a community's modern day. Locals run errands to the bank, the barber, the bakery.

Even now, when my mother comes to visit me from New York, she loves to see what kinds of deals she can track down in Chinatown. Beautifully lacquered Peking duck for $15. Bitter melon, pea shoots, Chinese chestnuts bursting from produce stands. Yan and I see a sign advertising bull penis (for virility). In a fish market, we admire the clear-eyed freshness and firm, springy flesh of *mang cho,* a kind of sea bass. There's a bucket of live frogs beside it. One fish attempts to escape the display, flopping along the floor to freedom.

The Great China Herb Co., established in 1922, still does a thriving business. The man behind the counter fires up his abacus and tallies accounts with lightning-fast clicks. "All modern medicine grew out of traditional medicine," Yan says, gesturing at a wall filled with glass jars. "If you need a prescription, you can get it here." Things always come around again, and connections from the past are useful and valid. Chinatown is a place to find that thread.

THE ENERGY OF today's crowd, young and old, invigorates Yan. Nearly four decades after he arrived, he's still fascinated by the neighborhood. "People always ask, 'Is there any change?' Of course there's change," Yan tells me, throwing up his hands. "Everywhere is changing. But it's slower in this Chinatown because there's a big population of people living in the heart of it."

I appreciate his enthusiasm, but I have a different relationship with the neighborhood. I can't help but remember what my grandparents said about finally leaving New York's Chinatown: Though they missed some things, they were happy to go. For those who came up in the neighborhood, it's still a place of poverty. Moving up means

moving out. And for those who never lived in Chinatown, it's likely that they'll never need it. Yan himself, whose mini empire extends to all corners of the globe, lives far from Chinatown's cramped alleys. If he immigrated to the States today, chances are he'd land in Cupertino or the San Gabriel Valley or one of the countless suburban Chinese American communities that thrive in the West.

And yet. My grandparents still go back. Yan and the rest of us still come. Besides the tangible things that serve the neighborhood—food and groceries, affordable housing, Chinese-language everything—there are traditions that feed the soul.

We walk a couple of blocks to the corner of Stockton Street and Pacific Avenue. At 10:30 a.m., the New Asia Restaurant is jammed, but we find seats. A woman at the next table comes over to say hello to Yan; they hail from the same village in China. Yan pours my tea and ensures that there is a continuous parade of dumplings across my plate. At the end, we fight for the bill, just like I do with my relatives.

We stroll to Vital Tea Leaf, on Grant Avenue, where Ming Dong, son of owner and local personality "Uncle Gee," pours, rinses, and speed-steeps cups with expert precision. At one point, he throws a handful of angel green tea into a glass filled with hot water. The tips bloom into a mass of leafy emerald sprigs, bobbing gently in the water. Dong explains that this variety, using just the tips of the tea plant, has a fresh, sweet flavor.

Between sips, he and Yan chatter in Cantonese about the next generation of young chefs revitalizing the neighborhood. Yan offers to introduce Dong to furniture makers in China to source tables and chairs for the younger man's new Chinatown venture, Begoni, a fusion restaurant and wine bar.

Yan is passionate about tea and wants to educate me. "It's not just food, it's medicinal—it cleanses your body," he says. As a handful of hip 20-something tourists bellies up to the tea bar, he walks around the store, raising his eyebrows at the shapely teapots and imported tea cakes from Yunnan. He and Dong muse on the idea of hosting a tea banquet, in which tea is used not just as a beverage but also to cook each course: to smoke duck, for example, or to make a sauce.

Yan is always on the lookout for something new. This past fall, his new series, *Taste of Vietnam*, aired on PBS. And he is already gearing up to film a show in Hong Kong that will track China's disappearing cuisines.

Back on Clay Street near Portsmouth Square, Yan and I part ways. I ask him where he's headed. "Oh, I'm going to go buy the Chinese newspaper and do some grocery shopping," he says, chuckling, already eyeing the produce displays across the street. "Since I'm here, you know. It's what I always do."

His words comfort me. I think of my mother, rushing off to Chinatown to pick up a customary box of *char siu bao* (roast pork buns) for my two young sons, who now know to ask her for them. It's a small gesture, a tradition, and I hope it lasts forever.

DIGITAL BONUS Tag along as Martin Yan shows photographer Tom Story around S.F.'s Chinatown: *sunset.com/yantour.*





KNOW YOUR CHINATOWN

An essential guide to the neighborhood's best tea bars, wok shops, and restaurants

THE BIG BASH

CHINESE NEW YEAR FESTIVAL & PARADE

Ring in the Year of the Goat at the largest Chinese New Year celebration outside Asia, with fireworks, floats, drum corps, lion dancers, and the crowning of Miss Chinatown. *Mar 7; chineseparade.com.*

HISTORY FIX

CHINESE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA

Inside the gorgeous landmark Chinatown YWCA building, designed by architect Julia Morgan, the museum does a knockout job with exhibits and programs related to Chinese culture. *Free; 965 Clay St.; chsa.org.*

HOUSE OF WORSHIP

TIN HOW TEMPLE

Go back in time in the century-old Buddhist temple, housed in a four-level apartment building, where locals pray, burn incense, and get their fortunes read. *Donation suggested; 125 Waverly Place.*

CURE FOR WHAT AILS YOU

GREAT CHINA HERB CO.

Feeling lethargic? Let the in-house doctor prescribe you revitalizing teas and tonics prepared with dry herbs at this long-respected Chinese apothecary. *857 Washington St.; (415) 982-2195.*

OLD-SCHOOL RESTAURANT

R&G LOUNGE

A longtime restaurant beloved for its high-quality signature Cantonese dishes: tender glazed spare ribs, delicate salt-and-pepper Dungeness crab. *$$$; 631 Kearny St.; rnglounge.com.*

THE NEWCOMER

BEGONI BISTRO

This modern Chinese-Vietnamese restaurant earns major points for its warm-wood style, tasty shaking beef and roasted squab, and craft beer selection on tap. *$$$; 615 Jackson St.; begonibistro.com.*

STEEPED IN TEA

VITAL TEA LEAF

Sample the many brews of *Camellia sinensis* at this tea bar and shop, one of five branches in S.F. and Seattle. *1044 Grant Ave.; vitaltealeaf.net.*

ASIAN SNACK SHOP

MING LEE TRADING INC.

An old-timey grocery and de facto candy and snack emporium that carries everything from litchi gummies and green-tea Kit Kats to dried and salted fruits, noodles, and spices. *759 Jackson; (415) 217-0088.*

PASTRY WORTH THE WAIT

GOLDEN GATE BAKERY

If you're in the market for fresh *dan tat,* the traditional Chinese egg-custard tart with a flaky, buttery crust, this is the only place to get it. Period. *1029 Grant; (415) 781-2627.*

COOKWARE CENTRAL

THE WOK SHOP

The best thing about a visit here is witnessing owner Tane Chan in action as she whirls from one customer to the next, chatting, laughing, and helping to select the best wok for each shopper. *718 Grant; wokshop.com.*



Grilled fish tacos from The Marshall Store, Marshall, CA



Are you the kind of person who plans an entire trip around a single taco? (We are.) These four perfect drives from Brigit Binns's new book, *Eating Up the West Coast,* are for you. (And us.)

At *Sunset,* we consider food to be the sustaining glory of any road trip. Cookbook author, food blogger, and road-trip fanatic Brigit Binns is a kindred spirit. Every fall for six years, she drove from New York to California, and every winter, she'd drive back, always in the company of her dog, Stella. Naturally good at finding great places to stop for food and drink, she chronicled her favorites in a highly entertaining blog, *roadfoodie.com.*

When we proposed that Brigit drive from Southern California to Washington for a cookbook, planning her itineraries around where to eat and scooping up recipes from her favorite restaurants, she immediately said yes.

In the next few pages, you'll get a taste of Brigit's gleeful plunge into what she calls "the spectacular smorgasbord" of our "quirky, romantic, and delectable" western coast. Avoiding big cities, she explored distinctively tasty and scenic routes—including the four we're featuring here—along the coasts of California, Oregon, and Washington, checking out proper restaurants as well as bakeries, farmers' markets, and dives. She also met quite a cast of characters, like the husband-wife team behind Oink and Moo, the endearingly wacky temple to pork in Fallbrook, California. Or the couple who opened Vita Cucina bakery-restaurant in Crescent City, Oregon, after two seasons of cooking in Antarctica.

She'd send their prized recipes to us for testing in the *Sunset* Test Kitchen, and for a happy stretch, we were making everything from grilled quail salad from the Ranch House in Ojai, California, to legendary Dungeness crab mac 'n' cheese from Pickled Fish in Washington's Long Beach—as if we were eating along the road with her. The book is coming out next month, so you can come along too. In fact, you might want two copies—one for your kitchen and one for your car.

THOMAS J. STORY (FOOD STYLING: KAREN SHINTO; PROP STYLING: EMMA STAR JENSEN); ILLUSTRATION: SUPRIYA KALIDAS

SOUTHERN

California

BRIGIT'S ROUTE: OJAI TO LOS OLIVOS TO LOS ALAMOS TO NIPOMO

I'M ALL FOR off the beaten track, and this route is exactly that—starting with the family ranches, orchards, and mountainside views that surround *Ojai,* a haven for artists as well as weekenders from Hollywood. From Ojai, I hop on State 150, which winds above Lake Casitas to Santa Barbara. Then State 154 leads me to *Los Olivos,* where small art galleries and boutiques dot wide, bucolic streets. A few miles away, *Los Alamos* is a town transformed. Not long ago, tumbleweeds rolled down Main Street; now there are more tasting rooms and great restaurants per capita than in Greenwich Village. And then there's little *Nipomo,* where Jocko's Steak House lures me off the road with rib-eyes and cocktails.



The Spencer steak at Jocko's Steak House

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: DAVE LAURIDSEN, LISA CORSON, HÉLÈNE DUJARDIN, DAVE LAURIDSEN, LISA CORSON





1 THE RANCH HOUSE
Ojai

This quintessentially California restaurant (above) has remained virtually the same for decades yet doesn't feel dated, with lush gardens, koi-filled ponds, and an award-winning wine cellar. Alan Hooker, a member of Ojai's Theosophical Society, opened it in 1953 (with some menu advice from Krishnamurti). *102 Besant Rd.; theranchhouse.com.*



2 SIDES HARDWARE AND SHOES
Los Olivos

Brothers Matt and Jeff Nichols named this restaurant (above) in honor of the store that occupied this building more than 100 years ago. Everyone just calls it Sides, and lines stretch down the sidewalk for the albacore, pork belly tacos, and Hammered Pig sandwich or salad ("hammered," because of the hardware connection, naturally). *2375 Alamo Pintado Ave.; sidesrestaurant.com.*



3 BELL STREET FARM
Los Alamos

Jamie Gluck, a creative director, and John Wentworth, a TV studio exec, moved to this then-sleepy town several years ago and opened Bell Street, which Gluck calls a "French restaurant masquerading as an American cafe." Be sure to order the roast chicken salad (below; for recipe, see page 81). *406 Bell St.; bellstreetfarm.com.*



4 JOCKO'S STEAK HOUSE
Nipomo

Ralph "Jocko" Knotts's sons opened this restaurant (left) in 1962, and it's still in the family. Go for the outstanding steak, excellent cocktails, and old-fashioned relish tray. There's usually a wait, so get there early and enjoy some conversation at the bar. *125 N. Thompson Ave.; (805) 929-3565.*

ALSO SEE

OJAI HIKING TRAILS
Ojai Valley

Just south of the Los Padres National Forest, the Ojai Valley offers hiking trails that range from easy to challenging, along creek-beds and through citrus and avocado groves to mountain peaks. You may even see some Chumash pictographs. *Shelf Rd.: alltrails.com. Pratt: trails.com. Last Chance: ventura countytrails.com.*

LA PURISIMA MISSION
Lompoc

Founded in 1787 and once commanding 470 square miles, this adobe compound has been extensively restored. It's a superb example of the Franciscan missions that lined El Camino Real—the old Royal Road—exactly one day's horseback ride apart. Take a self-guided tour and get up close and personal with Old California. *2295 Purisima Rd.; lapurisimamission.org*

GUADALUPE-NIPOMO DUNES COMPLEX
Guadalupe

At 18 miles long, this is one of the world's largest intact coastal dune ecosystems. Parts of it (home to many endangered and threatened species) have been set aside for conservation. *1065 Guadalupe St.; dunescenter.org.*

NORTHERN

CALIFORNIA

BRIGIT'S ROUTE: POINT REYES STATION TO MARSHALL TO BODEGA TO POINT ARENA

NORTHERN Californians will tell you that this drive is the state's most stunning route. As a SoCal native, I may differ, but not loudly: For generations, this pastoral landscape has been shaped by the food it produces—oysters, clams, and dairy products. From *Point Reyes Station,* I savor the drive up the east side of *Tomales Bay,* home to about a gazillion oysters, and by blink-and-you'll-miss-it *Marshall* (I don't, so I can stop at The Marshall Store for tacos), and then visit *Bodega;* it's where Hitchcock filmed *The Birds.* North of Bodega Bay lies an otherworldly landscape of promontories, precipices, and mist—and *Point Arena,* with its magnificent lighthouse. It's touristy in summer, but in winter, residents trade the same $20 bill for months.



The Marshall Store



1 OSTERIA STELLINA
Point Reyes Station

When Christian Caiazzo moved to Point Reyes Station in 2001, he exulted in the food of this rich agricultural region—and was floored by how seldom it showed up on menus in town. So he's dedicated his light-filled place (left) to local cooking. His next-door shop sells bounty to go. *11285 State 1; osteriastellina.com.*





2 THE MARSHALL STORE
Marshall

As you tuck into the unrivaled fish tacos and shellfish perfumed by the smokehouse next door, ducks will be diving mere feet away from your perch on the deck (above). If it's cold, head inside to the stand-up-only bar, where you can watch the shuckers grill your oysters. *19225 State 1; themarshallstore.com.*



3 CASINO BAR & GRILL
Bodega

You may experience a small crisis of confidence when you pass through the door to what looks like a dive bar. Persevere. In a smaller bar at the back (left), Evelyn Casini, the owner since 1949, works with different chefs to serve food made with the greatest ingredients West Marin has to offer. *17000 Bodega Hwy.; (707) 876-3185.*

4 FRANNY'S CUP & SAUCER
Point Arena

Franny Burkey and her mom, Barbara, run this Point Arena bakery (below), with treats from doughnut muffins to chocolates. Don't miss the Raspberry Violet Rhapsody truffles. *213 Main St.; frannyscupandsaucer.com.*



ALSO SEE

BLUE WATERS KAYAKING
Marshall

There is perhaps no better way to experience Tomales Bay than from a kayak, and this company gives you several ways to do it: a morning paddle, a sunset tour, or a full day of delving into inlets and outcrops. *19225 Shoreline Hwy.; bluewaterskayaking.com.*

BODEGA COUNTRY STORE
Bodega

This ramshackle clapboard building, filled with memorabilia from *The Birds*, might appear to be a tourist trap—you can even pick up a life-size cutout of Alfred Hitchcock himself—but the crab rolls, salmon chowder, and more are sophisticated and delicious. *17190 Bodega Hwy.; bodegastore.com.*

GUALALA POINT REGIONAL PARK
Gualala

Offering 195 acres of trails, beaches, coastal forests, and meadows, this tranquil park also has picnicking and "civilized" campsites (that is, there's hot water in the bathrooms). Dogs on leashes are welcome. *42401 State 1; parks.sonomacounty.ca.gov.*

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: THOMAS J. STORY (3), DAVID FENTON, THOMAS J. STORY

OREGON

BRIGIT'S ROUTE: PACIFIC CITY TO MANZANITA TO CANNON BEACH TO ASTORIA

OREGON'S northwest coast is within weekending distance of Portland, but it feels much farther to me. I start my journey on the windswept beaches of *Pacific City* and then make my way up to *Tillamook*, where the predominant industries are cheese and smoked foods. From there, I head to the historic town of *Wheeler* and charming one-street-long *Manzanita* to discover unassuming restaurants serving big city–quality food. The popular vacation town of *Cannon Beach* is worth a stop for cocktails alone, but the architectural gem of *Astoria,* the oldest city west of the Rockies, is the place that tempts me to move here for good.



Blackbird restaurant

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: JUSTIN BAILIE (3), THOMAS J. STORY, JUSTIN BAILIE



1 RISING STAR CAFE
Wheeler

This mom-'n'-pop cafe (above) makes all the miles worthwhile. Ron Allen and Pepi Gabor offer outstanding local seafood (and a full bar!) in a small bungalow. *92 Rorvik St.; risingstarcafe.com.*



2 BLACKBIRD
Manzanita

Lee Vance started cooking from her mother's garden as a child, setting her on a lifelong farm-to-table path. At Blackbird (above), the restaurant that she crowdfunded to open, she makes the best seasonal, local food around. *503 Laneda Ave.; blackbird manzanita.com.*

3 CASTAWAYS RESTAURANT & TIKI BAR
Cannon Beach

The tiny cedar-shingled building (right) started out as a bar. But food crept in, and Castaways is now snug in the firmament of worth-a-detour dining. The eclectic cuisine—billed as "Cajun & Creole"—is as serious as the cocktails. *316 N. Fir St.; (503) 436-8777.*





4 ASTORIA COFFEEHOUSE & BISTRO
Astoria

Jim Defeo and his partner, Anthony Danton, moved to Astoria to retire—and wound up opening a restaurant, with food prepared by fish-loving chef Sean Whittaker. The breakfast hash (above; see page 80 for recipe) is one of the best ways to enjoy smoked salmon, a local specialty. *243 11th St.; astoriacoffeehouse.com.*



ALSO SEE

TILLAMOOK AIR MUSEUM
Near Tillamook

This 7-acre hangar (the largest clear-span wooden structure in the world) has military and civilian aircraft, including a MiG-17 and an F-14. *6030 Hangar Rd.; tillamookair.com.*

BLUE HERON FRENCH CHEESE COMPANY
Tillamook

What other cheese shop has live music and a petting zoo? Plus, there's wine and other goodies. *2001 Blue Heron Dr.; blueheronoregon.com.*

ROSEANNA'S CAFE
Oceanside

Swing by this cute no-reservations beachside spot for ultra-fresh fish and fruit cobbler (marionberry is a go-to). *1490 Pacific Ave. N.W.; roseannascafe.com.*

THE NEHALEM BEEHIVE
Nehalem

This mellow tea/coffee shop and reading room also sells bulk herbs, candles, and local crafts, as well as organic produce. *35870 Seventh St.; (503) 368-2337.*

Washington

BRIGIT'S ROUTE: QUILCENE TO PORT TOWNSEND TO SEQUIM TO PORT ANGELES

WINDING UP THE eastern edge of the Olympic Peninsula, the Hood Canal's protected waters create an ideal environment for oysters. I start my drive in tiny *Quilcene,* where oyster hatcheries have replaced the timber industry. From there, I drive up to *Port Townsend.* Once envisioned as the largest harbor on the West Coast, it's now a City of Dreams for refugees from Seattle, who appreciate the stunning architecture and small-city feel. Heading west, I stop in the charming seaside town of *Sequim.* After getting my fill of farm-to-table cuisine—and stocking up on elk jerky (sold at many roadside stands)—I wind up in *Port Angeles,* the perfect base for exploring Olympic National Park.





Blueberry dutch baby at Sweet Laurette Café & Bistro

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: HÉLÈNE DUJARDIN; MICHAEL HANSON (3)

1 THE TIMBERHOUSE RESTAURANT
Quilcene

This imposing-outside, cozy-inside eatery (right) was built in the 1970s as a place for timber crews to eat. Now it's a destination restaurant, where repeat customers often ask for "their" server and "their" table. *295534 U.S. 101; olympictimberhouse.com.*



2 SWEET LAURETTE CAFÉ & BISTRO
Port Townsend

A slice of homestyle goodness, this cafe (right) is lovably quirky. The Carhartt's Breakfast Special, for example, offers a $1 discount to anyone wearing the overalls. Be sure to order the blueberry dutch baby (above; recipe opposite). *1029 Lawrence St.; sweetlaurette.com.*





3 ALDER WOOD BISTRO
Sequim

For years, Sequim (say *skwim*) believed it wasn't big enough to support a fine eatery. Then Gabriel and Jessica Schuenemann opened Alder Wood, which celebrates the Olympic Peninsula's culinary bounty. Gabriel sources Tamworth hogs and crafts beer with a local brewery, and farmers come in to taste their own produce, beautifully cooked. *139 W. Alder St.; alderwoodbistro.com.*



4 MICHAEL'S SEAFOOD & STEAKHOUSE
Port Angeles

The clubby interior of Michael's (above) is festooned with old album covers, vintage bar games, and Euro-bistro posters. Owner Michael Lynch tends bar, mans the phone, and often cooks too—everything from duck confit to Philly cheesesteak flatbread. *117B E. First St.; michaelsdining.com.*



ALSO SEE

HAMA HAMA OYSTER COMPANY
Lilliwaup

Stop here for expertly grilled oysters topped with garlic-herb or garlic-chipotle butter. *35846 U.S. 101; hamahamaoysters.com.*

MT. WALKER VIEWPOINT
South of Quilcene

Navigating up for the N-S-E-W views is part of the adventure (RVs, please don't attempt). Even on a cloudy day, you'll be wowed: The cloud line is often below the summit. *1.usa.gov/ZSIQZS.*

101 BREWERY AT TWANA ROADHOUSE
Quilcene

This family-run brewery is tailor-made for hungry travelers, with microbrews that go down nicely with the fried oysters and handmade burgers. *294793 U.S. 101; 101brewery.com.*

DUNGENESS SPIT
Near Sequim

Habitat for salmon and birds and home to outrageous driftwood shapes, it's a stunning hike. *Voice of America Rd. W.; fws.gov/washingtonmaritime/dungeness.*

HURRICANE RIDGE
Near Port Angeles

Picnic areas let you take in the mountains of the Olympic Peninsula without putting on skis or boots. True to its name, it's subject to dramatic weather. *nps.gov/olym.*

RECIPES

SWEET LAURETTE CAFÉ'S

BLUEBERRY DUTCH BABY with LEMON CURD

SERVES 3 TO 4 / 45 MINUTES, PLUS 1 HOUR TO REST

This showstopping breakfast "pancake" (opposite) will amply reward you for making the trip to Laurette Feit's cafe. Or make it at home. Either way, you'll be amazed at the treat's puff.

LEMON CURD
Zest of 2 lemons
1/2 cup lemon juice
3/4 cup sugar
2 large eggs
1/2 cup unsalted butter, cut into 4 pieces

BATTER
3/4 cup all-purpose flour
1 tbsp. sugar
1/4 tsp. fine sea salt
3 large eggs
3/4 cup whole milk
1 tsp. vanilla extract
2 tbsp. melted unsalted butter or vegetable oil
1 cup fresh or frozen blueberries
Powdered sugar, for serving

1. Make lemon curd: In top of a double boiler or in a heatproof bowl, whisk together lemon zest and juice, sugar, and eggs. Add butter and set over (not in) a saucepan of simmering water. Cook mixture, whisking constantly, until thickened, about 20 minutes. Strain through a fine-mesh sieve into a bowl. Put in an airtight container and chill until ready to use.
2. Make batter: In a large bowl, combine flour, sugar, and salt. In a large glass measuring cup, whisk together eggs, milk, and vanilla. Gently whisk wet ingredients into dry ingredients until everything is thoroughly blended. Cover and let stand at room temperature 1 hour or, preferably, chill in refrigerator 2 to 3 hours.
3. About 20 minutes before end of resting time, preheat oven to 450°. When oven is very hot, put in a 10-in. cast-iron skillet for 10 minutes to thoroughly preheat. Working quickly, with all ingredients at hand, pull skillet out of oven with oven mitts and set on stovetop or a heatproof trivet. Pour in melted butter and swirl pan (use caution; it will spatter). Whisk batter to smooth it out. Pour batter into skillet, scatter blueberries over the top, and return pan to oven.
4. Bake until dutch baby is puffed up and golden brown around edges and set in center, about 15 minutes. Sift with powdered sugar. Divide among plates and top with lemon curd.

MAKE AHEAD *Lemon curd, covered and chilled, up to 2 weeks. Batter, covered and chilled, up to 3 hours.*

PER SERVING 648 Cal., 50% (327 Cal.) from fat; 12 g protein; 37 g fat; (21 g sat.); 70 g carbo (1.9 g fiber); 208 mg sodium; 345 mg chol. LS/V

ASTORIA COFFEEHOUSE & BISTRO'S

SMOKED SALMON "HASH"

SERVES 4 / 1¼ HOURS

In Astoria, Oregon, smoked fish is big business, and you can taste a variety of styles in the area's smokehouses—many based on old family recipes. Astoria Coffeehouse pairs hot-smoked salmon with its house potatoes and hollandaise sauce.

COFFEEHOUSE POTATOES

- 2 lbs. small red potatoes (each about the size of a golf ball), cut into quarters
- 1½ tbsp. plus 2 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ tsp. *each* paprika and granulated garlic
- ¾ tsp. fine sea salt, plus more to taste
- ½ tsp. pepper, plus more to taste
- ½ cup diced white or yellow onion (about ¼ of a large onion)
- 1 red, yellow, or green bell pepper (or use a combination), stemmed, seeded, and cut into ½-in. chunks
- 12 oz. hot smoked salmon (sometimes called kippered), in chunks

HOLLANDAISE SAUCE

- Finely shredded zest of 1 lemon
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- 2 large egg yolks
- 14 tbsp. (7 oz.) unsalted butter, cut into small chunks and softened
- ¼ tsp. fine sea salt
- Tiny pinch of cayenne
- 1 tsp. distilled white vinegar or cider vinegar
- 8 large eggs

1. Bake potatoes: Preheat oven to 350°. Put potatoes in a large metal roasting pan and drizzle with 1½ tbsp. oil. Season with paprika, granulated garlic, ¾ tsp. salt, and ½ tsp. pepper and toss to mix; spread into an even layer. Drizzle ¾ cup water around potatoes, then wrap pan securely with foil, crimping edges. Bake potatoes until tender, 45 to 50 minutes. Remove foil and bake 5 to 10 minutes more to evaporate remaining water.
2. Make hollandaise sauce: In top of a double boiler or bowl set over (not in) a saucepan of barely simmering water, combine lemon zest and juice and egg yolks. Whisk gently until the mixture just barely begins to thicken to a thin, yogurtlike consistency, 1 to 2 minutes. Whisk in a chunk of butter. Continue whisking in butter a chunk at a time, whisking constantly and allowing each chunk to be absorbed before adding the next. Do not let mixture boil. (If it does, remove from the heat for a minute or two while still whisking.) Whisk in salt and cayenne, cover, and set aside at back of the stove, off the heat, for up to 15 minutes. Stir before serving.
3. In a large, heavy frying pan, warm remaining 2 tsp. oil over medium-high heat. Sauté onion and bell pepper until tender and slightly golden, 2 to 3 minutes. Fold in potatoes and cook 2 to 3 minutes, pressing down gently to help the browning process. Fold in salmon and cook 1 to 2 minutes more to warm through. Taste for seasoning and adjust with salt and pepper.
4. Meanwhile, in a wide saucepan with a tight-fitting lid, bring 3 in. of water to a very gentle simmer and add vinegar. Crack 4 eggs, one at a time, just above surface of water. Cover pan and cook 3 minutes, or until whites are just set. With a slotted spoon, remove eggs from poaching water, resting the spoon on a folded paper towel for a moment to drain excess water, then transferring to a plate. Repeat with remaining eggs.
5. To serve, divide hash among 4 plates. Top each with 2 poached eggs, then spoon some hollandaise sauce over the top.

PER SERVING 915 Cal., 62% (568 Cal.) from fat; 36 g protein; 64 g fat (31 g sat.); 51 g carbo (5.4 g fiber); 1,380 mg sodium; 653 mg chol.

THE MARSHALL STORE'S

GRILLED FISH TACOS with CHILE-LIME SLAW and AVOCADO-TOMATILLO SALSA

SERVES 2 TO 4 / 35 MINUTES, PLUS 1 HOUR TO CHILL AND ROAST

All great fish tacos share certain traits: The slaw must be cool and crisp, the fish of the highest quality, and the spices pungent. At The Marshall Store, they do it right. You can too.

CHILE-LIME SLAW

- 2½ cups *each* shredded red cabbage and shredded green cabbage (each about ¼ of a medium cabbage)
- 1 cup cilantro, roughly chopped
- ½ jalapeño chile, stemmed, seeded, and minced
- Juice of 3 large limes
- ½ tsp. fine sea salt
- ¼ tsp. pepper

AVOCADO-TOMATILLO SALSA

- 1 lb. tomatillos, peeled and quartered
- ¼ yellow onion, sliced
- 1 jalapeño chile, stemmed, halved, and seeded
- 1 ripe avocado, pitted and peeled
- 1 cup cilantro leaves and tender stems
- ½ tsp. fine sea salt
- ¼ tsp. pepper

FISH

- 1½ tsp. *each* ground coriander, ground cumin, and Hungarian sweet paprika
- 1 lb. rock cod fillets, cut into 1½-in. chunks
- ¼ tsp. *each* fine sea salt and pepper
- 2 tsp. canola or vegetable oil
- 8 corn tortillas (6 in.), homemade or store-bought
- 1 shallot, finely chopped
- 1 jalapeño chile, stemmed, seeded, and minced
- Cilantro leaves, for garnish
- Lime wedges

1. Make slaw: Toss all ingredients together in a bowl. Chill at least 30 minutes and up to 2 hours, tossing occasionally.
2. Make salsa: Preheat oven to 425°. In a small roasting pan, toss together tomatillos, onion, and jalapeño. Roast until browned in places and tender, 25 minutes. Cool to room temperature and chill until close to serving time. In a blender, blend roasted vegetables, avocado, cilantro, salt, and pepper until smooth.
3. Grill fish: Prepare a grill for medium-high heat (450°). In a small, dry cast-iron skillet over medium heat, toast coriander and cumin until aromatic, 20 seconds; remove from heat and stir in paprika. Season fish chunks with salt and pepper and coat evenly with coriander mixture. Brush cooking grate clean and coat fish on both sides with oil. Place fish on an oiled grilling grid or in a fish basket, and grill without moving for 2 minutes. Begin turning fish chunks with a metal spatula, in the order added to grill, and cook until firm and golden, 2 minutes. Transfer to a platter. (Or, cook fish in an oiled, well-seasoned cast-iron skillet or grill pan.)
4. Warm tortillas: Heat a skillet over medium-high heat. Working with one tortilla at a time, dip into a shallow bowl of water. Cook in hot skillet until water evaporates from first side and tortilla is browned in places, about 30 seconds. Flip and cook until dry, about 15 seconds more. Wrap in a clean kitchen towel to keep warm. Repeat with remaining tortillas.
5. Flake some fish onto each tortilla, then top with slaw and salsa. Scatter a little shallot and jalapeño over the top, and garnish with cilantro leaves. Serve with lime wedges.

PER 2-TACO SERVING 585 Cal., 43% (249 Cal.) from fat; 28 g protein; 29 g fat (2.6 g sat.); 62 g carbo (12 g fiber); 816 mg sodium; 37 mg chol. GF

BELL STREET FARM'S

ROAST CHICKEN SALAD with ROSEMARY CROUTONS and WHITE BEAN HUMMUS

SERVES 4 TO 6 / 20 MINUTES, PLUS ABOUT 2 HOURS TO ROAST

The Middle Eastern spice blend *zaatar* contributes a fruity, tart flavor (think cranberries) that's a fabulous counterpoint to the richness of roast chicken. You could also use store-bought rotisserie chicken.

CHICKEN
- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- 3 tbsp. *zaatar**
- 1 tsp. fine sea salt
- ½ tsp. pepper
- 1 whole chicken (4½ lbs.)

WHITE BEAN HUMMUS
- 1 garlic clove
- ½ tsp. fresh rosemary
- 1 can (15.5 oz.) cannellini beans, drained and rinsed well
- 2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tsp. lemon juice
- ¼ tsp. each fine sea salt and pepper

BELL STREET VINAIGRETTE
- 3 tbsp. red wine vinegar
- ⅓ cup canola oil
- 3 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ tsp. Dijon mustard
- ½ tsp. fine sea salt
- ¼ tsp. pepper

SALAD
- 8 oz. crustless French baguette, torn into bite-size pieces (4 cups)
- 2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ tsp. fine sea salt
- ¼ tsp. pepper
- 1 ½ heads butter lettuce, pale inner hearts only, torn into bite-size pieces (4 cups)

1. Roast chicken: Preheat oven to 375°. In a bowl, combine oil, zaatar, salt, and pepper; stir to create a paste. Rub chicken all over with paste, rubbing it into and under skin on breast. Set chicken on a roasting pan coated with cooking spray. Roast until golden brown and crisp, about 1½ hours or until a meat thermometer inserted in thickest part registers 165°. Let stand 15 minutes. Meanwhile, reduce temperature to 350° for croutons. Cut chicken into 8 pieces.**
2. Make hummus: In a food processor, pulse garlic and rosemary until chopped, about 5 times. Add beans, oil, lemon juice, salt, and pepper. Process until very smooth, adding 2 to 3 tbsp. water if necessary to make a nice dipping consistency. Divide purée among 4 small ramekins.
3. Make vinaigrette: In a jar, shake all ingredients until emulsified. Shake again just before serving.
4. Make croutons: In a bowl, toss torn bread with oil; season with salt and pepper. Transfer to a baking sheet and bake until golden brown, 16 minutes, tossing occasionally.
5. Working quickly, in a large bowl, combine about half of vinaigrette and croutons. Toss to coat, then toss in lettuce. Divide among 4 plates and top each serving with 2 pieces chicken. Serve with ramekins of hummus for dipping chicken pieces. Pass remaining vinaigrette on the side.

** Zaatar usually includes marjoram, oregano, thyme, sesame, and sumac. Find at well-stocked grocery stores and online.*

*** To cut a roasted chicken into 8 serving pieces, use a good pair of kitchen shears: Cut each breast crosswise into 2 pieces, keeping the wing attached to 1 piece; cut the thighs from the drumsticks, keeping as much meat from the back with the thighs as possible. Discard the backbone or save in the freezer for stock.*

PER SERVING 1,265 Cal., 58% (740 Cal.) from fat; 77 g protein; 84 g fat (16 g sat.); 50 g carbo (7 g fiber); 1,430 mg sodium; 201 mg chol.



Learn more about the book: sunset.com/roadfoodbook.

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Food & Drink



FOOD STYLING: LILLIAN KANG

Photographs by IAIN BAGWELL

GREEN GARLIC PROSCIUTTO TOASTS

SERVES 4 / 30 MINUTES

Serve these robustly flavored open-face sandwiches as a light dinner with a big salad, or as appetizers, using small slices of baguette.

- 2 to 4 green garlic* stalks, trimmed (see "Tips for Cooks," right)
- ½ cup fresh goat cheese
- 2 tbsp. chopped flat-leaf parsley
- 1 tbsp. chopped fresh mint leaves
- About ¼ tsp. *each* kosher salt and pepper
- 2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 4 slices crusty bread (each ½ to ¾ in. thick) cut from a round loaf such as *pain au levain*
- 1 cup loosely packed small watercress sprigs
- 4 thin slices prosciutto (about 1¾ oz. total)

1. Finely chop enough green garlic to make ¼ cup. Cut more green garlic into 3-in.-long slivers to make ¼ cup; set aside.
2. Stir together chopped green garlic, cheese, parsley, mint, and ¼ tsp. *each* salt and pepper in a small bowl.
3. Heat 1 tbsp. oil in a small frying pan over medium-high heat. When hot, add slivered green garlic and sauté until about half of it begins to brown, 1 to 2 minutes. Transfer to paper towels to drain. Stir remaining oil from pan into cheese mixture.
4. Toast bread and spread with cheese mixture. Lay watercress on each, then drape prosciutto to fit. Top with green garlic slivers. Cut sandwiches in half. Drizzle remaining 1 tbsp. oil over sandwiches and sprinkle with more salt and pepper if you like.

**If you can't find green garlic, use 4 green onions (half chopped and half slivered) plus 2 minced garlic cloves.*

PER OPEN-FACE SANDWICH 321 Cal., 44% (140 Cal.) from fat; 14 g protein; 16 g fat (5.6 g sat.); 31 g carbo (2.1 g fiber); 903 mg sodium; 20 mg chol. LC

PEAK SEASON

Tips for cooks

Green garlic is simply immature regular garlic and tastes fresher and more delicate. It has juicy, edible stalks with no bulbs at the base (if picked quite young), or bulbs with tiny cloves that don't need peeling.

FIND Look for slender pale green stalks in springtime at farmers' markets and some supermarkets. Or substitute green onions plus regular garlic (see the recipes).

PREP Trim green garlic as you would green onions, removing tough tops (save to flavor soup) and roots, plus any tough outer layers. Ten stalks yield 2 cups chopped.



By KATE WASHINGTON



ANGEL HAIR PASTA with SHRIMP and GREEN GARLIC

SERVES 4 / 35 MINUTES

Light, lively green garlic and a little cream make this a perfect winter-into-spring pasta dish. The thin noodles soak up the sauce fast, so serve it immediately.

- 1½ tbsp. butter
- 5 or 6 green garlic* stalks, trimmed (see "Tips for Cooks," opposite) and cut into 3-in.-long slivers to make 1 cup
- ¼ cup dry white wine
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- ½ cup reduced-sodium chicken broth
- ¼ cup grated parmesan cheese
- ¼ tsp. nutmeg, preferably freshly grated
- About 1 tsp. *each* kosher salt and pepper
- 10 oz. angel hair pasta
- 1 lb. raw peeled, deveined medium shrimp (40 to 50 per lb.)
- 2 tbsp. sliced fresh chives

1. Melt butter in a 12-in. frying pan over medium heat. Add green garlic and cook, stirring often, until softened and fragrant, 4 to 5 minutes. Add wine, increase heat to medium-high, and cook until it has nearly evaporated, about 1 minute. Stir in cream, broth, parmesan, nutmeg, and 1 tsp. *each* salt and pepper. Bring to a simmer, reduce heat to medium-low, and cook until cream is slightly thickened, about 3 minutes.
2. Cook pasta according to package instructions until just tender, 3 to 4 minutes. Reserve 1 cup cooking water, then drain pasta.
3. Meanwhile, add shrimp to cream sauce, increase heat to medium, and cook, stirring occasionally, just until pink, 3 to 4 minutes. Add pasta to frying pan and stir to coat. Stir in reserved pasta water (mixture will be soupy, then thicken as it stands) and toss in chives. Add more salt and pepper if you like.

**If you can't find green garlic, use 1 cup slivered green onions plus 3 minced garlic cloves.*

PER SERVING 671 Cal., 43% (288 Cal.) from fat; 32 g protein; 32 g fat (18 g sat.); 64 g carbo (1.3 g fiber); 966 mg sodium; 274 mg chol.





CHINESE GREEN GARLIC PANCAKES

MAKES 4 / 1¼ HOURS, PLUS 30 MINUTES TO REST

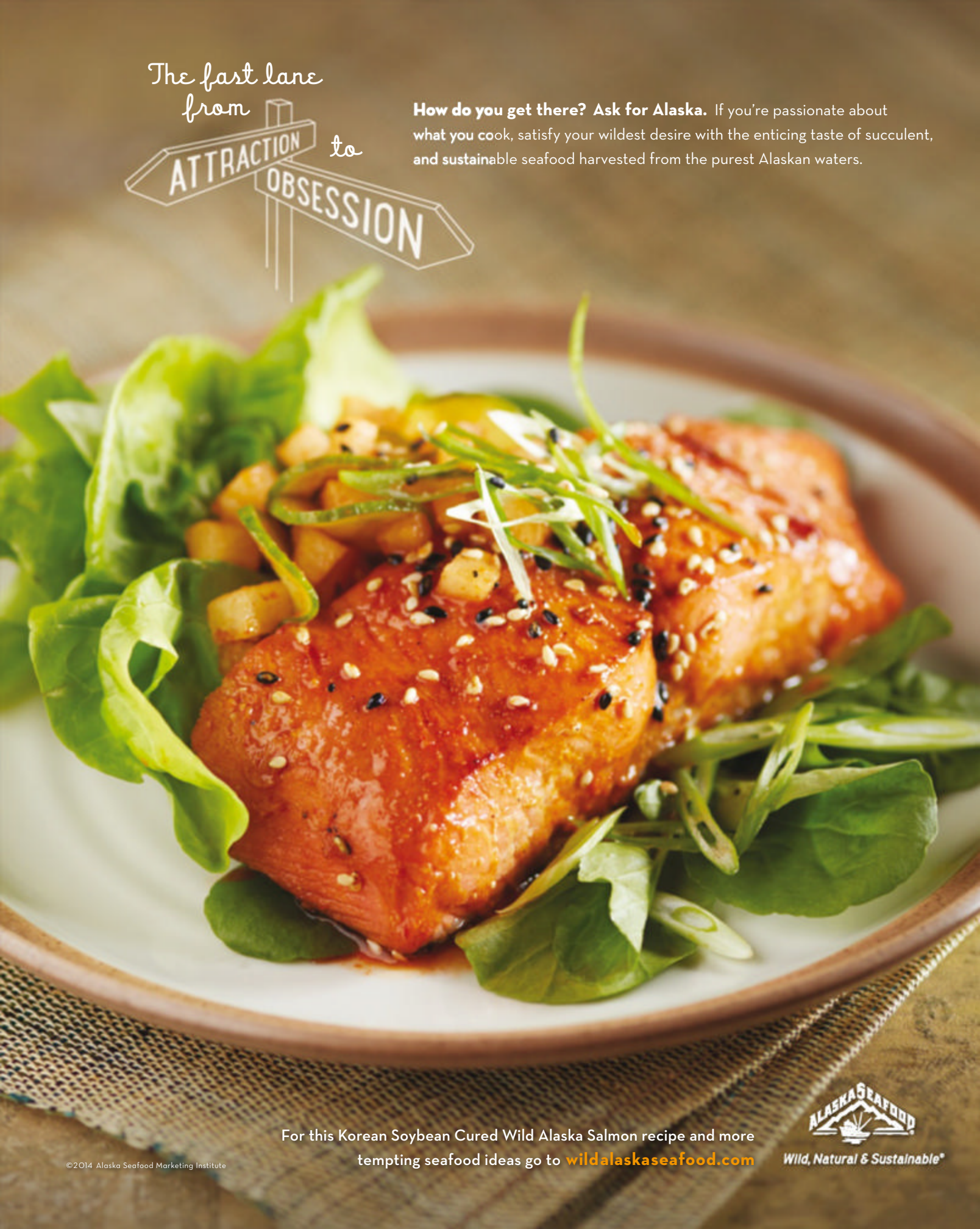
Using green garlic instead of the classic green onions makes these savory flatbreads especially aromatic. They're traditionally served as part of a dim sum spread; we also like them as appetizers or to eat with a saucy stir-fry.

About 2 cups flour
1 tsp. kosher salt
About 5 tbsp. vegetable oil, divided
About 10 green garlic* stalks, trimmed (see "Tips for Cooks," page 84) and chopped to make 2 cups
3 tbsp. reduced-sodium soy sauce
1 tbsp. unseasoned rice vinegar
1 tsp. chili garlic sauce or Sriracha chili sauce
1 tbsp. toasted sesame oil, divided

1. Stir together flour, salt, and ¾ cup plus 1 tbsp. boiling water in a bowl until a shaggy mass forms. Turn out onto a floured work surface and knead until smooth and elastic, 3 to 5 minutes. Wrap in plastic wrap and let rest 30 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, heat 1 tbsp. vegetable oil in a large nonstick frying pan over medium heat. Cook green garlic, stirring often, until softened and starting to brown, 4 to 5 minutes.
3. Combine soy sauce, vinegar, chili garlic sauce, and 1 tsp. sesame oil in a small bowl; set dipping sauce aside.
4. Divide reserved dough into 4 equal pieces and pat each into a disk. Roll each into a very thin circle about 12 in. wide, using just enough flour on the work surface to prevent sticking. In a bowl, mix 1 tbsp. vegetable oil with remaining 2 tsp. sesame oil. Lightly brush dough circles with oil mixture. Sprinkle one-quarter of cooked green garlic over each piece of dough.
5. Roll up each garlic-sprinkled dough circle like a cigar. Starting with one end, coil tube into a spiral so it looks like a cinnamon roll and press outer end into spiral to seal. Sprinkle each spiral with flour and carefully roll out into a flat disk about 6 in. wide (some garlic may poke through).
6. Heat 2 tsp. vegetable oil in the nonstick frying pan over medium heat (use 2 pans if you have them). Cook pancakes one at a time, adding oil for each batch and turning pancakes once or twice, until deep golden brown and crisp, about 8 minutes per side.
7. Cool pancakes slightly before cutting into wedges. Serve with dipping sauce.

**If you can't find green garlic, use 2 cups chopped green onions plus 6 minced garlic cloves.*

PER ½ PANCAKE WITH ABOUT ½ TBSP. SAUCE 219 Cal., 42% (93 Cal.) from fat; 4.1 g protein; 11 g fat (1.3 g sat.); 27 g carbo (1.6 g fiber); 403 mg sodium; 0 mg chol. **LC/VG**



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MAKIN' BACON

MASTER CLASS

Curing and smoking your own is a lot easier than you might think. *By Margo True*



THE HITCHING POST II in Buellton, California, is famous for appearing in the movie *Sideways,* but some come here for another reason entirely: the bacon. "I started making bacon about seven years ago for fun, to give to special customers," says executive chef Brad Lettau. He experimented with the seasonings until he hit upon an alluring combination of molasses, black pepper, brown sugar, and salt. Now his monster slices (cut half an inch thick from smoked slabs, then grilled until crisp-edged) are something of a cult item.

Lettau, whose easygoing nature makes him an ideal guide to the hows and whys of bacon, cures just enough for burgers Monday through Wednesday, with sometimes a little extra for topping salads. The good news for those of us who live far from Buellton: He's thinking of going into commercial production someday. In the meantime, he's sharing his recipe with us.



It takes about a week to make Brad Lettau's bacon recipe, but most of that time is hands-off.

BRAD'S HOMEMADE BACON

What about nitrite?



Brad Lettau cures his bacon without sodium nitrite, a salt used commercially to ward off bacteria. (Sodium nitrate, also sometimes used, converts to nitrite in the body.) Bacon made without nitrite tastes porkier and is browner; nitrite is what adds that familiar "bacon-y" taste and rosy hue.

Lettau's bacon is absolutely safe to make at home because it's roasted well. But if you're considering using sodium nitrite, here's what to know. In the 1970s, studies suggested it could be carcinogenic; however, the National Academy of Sciences and the American Medical Association have since concluded that, in the small amounts typically added to food, it isn't harmful. In fact, we get nitrite from vegetables (especially celery and spinach).

If you opt to add sodium nitrite to Lettau's recipe (page 90), all that's required is 1 teaspoon of pink curing salt (a mix of 6.25 percent sodium nitrite and 93.75 percent salt) for every 5 pounds of meat, mixed in with the dry rub in step 1. The bright pink color means you won't mistake it for table salt. Find it on *amazon.com*.

FROM TOP: THOMAS J. STORY (2); JEFFERY CROSS

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BRAD'S HOMEMADE BACON

MAKES 5 TO 8 LBS. BACON (25 TO 40 THICK SLICES) / 6 TO 8 DAYS

Making the bacon is a three-step process: Cure, smoke, and roast. To light the small amount of charcoal required, you'll need inexpensive paraffin lighter cubes, available wherever barbecue supplies are sold. You'll also need wood chunks 2 to 4 inches wide. "They give off a little more smoke than chips and last longer," says Lettau. He uses fragrant California red oak chunks (find at *fruitawoodchunks.com*), but easy-to-find hickory, apple, and cherry make good-tasting bacon too. If you would like to use curing salt, see "What About Nitrite?" (page 88). *For directions for smoking bacon on a gas grill, see sunset.com/bacon-gas-grill.*

- 1 cup plus 1 tbsp. Diamond Crystal kosher salt or ⅔ cup Morton's kosher salt*
- ½ cup *each* granulated sugar and packed light brown sugar
- 1 rindless pork belly (5 to 8 lbs. without rind)
- 2 tbsp. *each* molasses (not blackstrap) and cracked black pepper

1. Mix together salt (and curing salt, if using; see page 88) and sugars in a bowl with your hands. **"That way you can break up the lumps in the brown sugar."** Rinse pork belly, pat dry, and cut in half crosswise (with the grain).
2. Rub pork halves all over with molasses [A]. **"Get it into all the nooks and crannies. When it's nice and lathered up, sprinkle both sides with pepper."** Follow the pepper with a generous sprinkling of salt-sugar mixture [B]; depending on the size of your halves, you may have quite a bit left over. **"Massage it in gently all over and then give them a little shake"** to get rid of the excess.
3. Put each half in a nonmetallic container with 2-in.-high sides, such as a Pyrex baking dish. Cover with plastic wrap.
4. Chill pork halves 5 days to 1 week, depending on their weight. Turn them over every day [C]. They will produce quite a bit of liquid, which you should leave in. **"You have to turn them religiously. That gets them to cure evenly."** They will feel firmer than they did when raw and will be a deep rosy brown color (rosier if using curing salt).
5. Rinse pork (it's okay if some pepper still sticks) and pat dry. **"Otherwise your bacon might be too salty."**
6. Meanwhile, stack 4 or 5 charcoal briquets and a couple of paraffin lighter cubes to one side in a chimney starter, ignite cubes, and let briquets burn until ashy and glowing, about 20 minutes.
7. Set an 8- by 10-in. disposable aluminum roasting pan on one side of grill's fire-grate. Arrange 4 or 5 wood chunks in pan in a single layer. With tongs, set the ashy briquets directly on chunks, spaced apart [D].
8. When chunks begin to smolder, open bottom vents of grill and set cooking grate in place with hinged section over wood. Lay pork halves, fat side up, on cooking grate but not directly over wood [E]. Set lid in place and fully open its vents. Your goal is to produce lots of billowing smoke.
9. Keeping the heat between 150° and 200°, smoke pork 3½ hours. Check the heat every 20 minutes or so. If it dips below 150°, add another chunk and/or ashy briquet to the pan. If it climbs above 200°, close top and bottom vents halfway, or remove a chunk or briquet.
10. Cool smoked bacon [F], uncovered, 4 hours, then wrap well in plastic wrap and chill overnight. **"You want it to be not so pliable when you cut it."**
11. If the bacon's sides are uneven, **"whack them off and use them in soup or beans. At the restaurant, we dice them up and make bacon jam too. I put that on everything!"** Set a metal rack in a rimmed baking pan; repeat with a second pan and rack. Slice bacon with the grain about ½ in. thick [G], then lay slices on racks [H].
12. Put pans in oven and turn to 425° (do not preheat oven). Roast bacon just until edges are crisp, about 30 minutes, rotating pans halfway through if necessary for even browning. **"I like to render it first so some of the fat drips out, but not so much that you get shrinkage."** Bacon can be cooled at this point, then wrapped in plastic wrap and chilled for up to 2 days.
13. To finish cooking, either grill it (as Lettau does at the restaurant), pan-fry it [I], or keep roasting until it's as crisp as you like. Lettau suggests not overcooking. **"I like the edges to be crisp but the rest juicy."**

* *Diamond Crystal is more voluminous than Morton's, so you need to use more of it for equivalent saltiness.*

MAKE AHEAD *Smoked bacon (through step 9), up to 1 day, wrapped in plastic wrap and chilled; or up to 2 months, frozen. Rendered bacon slices (through step 12), up to 2 days, wrapped in plastic wrap and chilled.*

DIGITAL BONUS Watch Lettau make bacon: ***sunset.com/baconvideo.***



A) COAT WITH MOLASSES, THEN PEPPER.



B) RUB WITH SALT-SUGAR MIX.



C) LET CURE IN THE FRIDGE 1 WEEK.



D) SET UP THE WOODSMOKE.



E) SMOKE OVER THE WOOD.



F) LET COOL.



G) CUT INTO THICK SLICES.



H) ROAST SLICES TO RENDER THE FAT.



I) TO CRISP: GRILL, PAN-FRY, OR ROAST.

THOMAS J. STORY (9)

FAST & FRESH

WEEKNIGHT COOKING

Recipes in 30 minutes or less



SPAGHETTI with BRUSSELS SPROUTS

SERVES 4 / 30 MINUTES

Brussels sprouts are the new kale! Here they're quickly browned and still slightly crunchy. To save time, slice them with a mandoline or a food processor fitted with the slicing blade attachment.

- Kosher salt for pasta water plus 1¼ tsp., divided
- 12 oz. whole-wheat spaghetti
- 1 lb. brussels sprouts
- 4 tbsp. olive oil
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 3 tbsp. butter, divided
- ½ tsp. pepper, divided
- 4 eggs
- ½ lemon, zested and juiced
- 2 oz. grated pecorino cheese (1 scant cup), divided

1. In a large pot of salted boiling water, cook pasta until just cooked through, 7 to 9 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, trim brussels sprouts and slice very thin. Heat oil in a large nonstick pan over medium-high heat. Add sprouts and 1 tsp. salt and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened and beginning to brown, 8 to 10 minutes. Add garlic, 2 tbsp. butter, and ¼ tsp. pepper and cook 30 seconds more. Transfer sprouts to a bowl. Wipe pan clean with a paper towel.
3. Return pan to medium-high heat and add remaining 1 tbsp. butter. When it's melted, crack in eggs and cook, covered, until whites are just set and butter is starting to brown, about 2 minutes. Season eggs with remaining ¼ tsp. *each* salt and pepper. Cover to keep warm.
4. Reserve 1 cup pasta-cooking water. Drain pasta and return to pot. Add sprouts, three-fourths of reserved cooking water, and lemon zest and juice. Cook, stirring, until everything is heated through. Add more cooking water if necessary. Add half of cheese and stir to just combine.
5. Divide pasta among 4 wide, shallow bowls and top each with some of the remaining cheese and an egg.

PER SERVING 667 Cal., 44% (292 Cal.) from fat; 25 g protein; 33 g fat (12 g sat.); 74 g carbo (14 g fiber); 1,195 mg sodium; 249 mg chol. V

ANNABELLE BREAKEY (FOOD STYLING: FANNY PAN)

Recipes by CHARLOTTE MARCH, STACY ADIMANDO & KATE WASHINGTON

PORK TENDERLOIN with CRUNCHY BEET SLAW

SERVES 4 / 30 MINUTES

When they're sliced thin or slivered, raw beets are very refreshing. A tangy dressing counterbalances their earthiness.

1¼ lbs. pork tenderloin, fat trimmed
1 tbsp. whole black peppercorns
About 1½ tsp. kosher salt
3 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil, divided
3 medium beets, preferably a mix of red and gold (1 lb. total)
Juice of 1 lemon (2 to 3 tbsp.)
2 tbsp. chopped flat-leaf parsley leaves

1. Preheat oven to 350°. Pat pork tenderloin dry. Pour peppercorns into a resealable plastic bag and coarsely crush them with the back of a chef's knife. Season pork generously with 1½ tsp. salt, then coat with crushed peppercorns.
2. Heat 1 tbsp. oil in a large ovenproof frying pan over high heat until hot but not smoking. Add pork and cook, turning over occasionally, until all sides are browned, 6 to 9 minutes. Transfer pan to oven and cook, turning over once, until an instant-read thermometer inserted in center registers 135°, 8 to 10 minutes. Remove and let rest about 5 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, peel beets with a vegetable peeler and coarsely grate with a food processor or box grater. Put in a medium bowl and add lemon juice, remaining 2 tbsp. oil, the parsley, and salt to taste; toss well.
4. Slice pork into ½-in.-thick pieces. Divide among 4 plates and serve with slaw.

PER SERVING 283 Cal., 42% (120 Cal.) from fat; 31 g protein; 14 g fat (2.5 g sat.); 8.6 g carbo (2.4 g fiber); 757 mg sodium; 92 mg chol. **GF/LC**





INDIAN-SPICED LAMB KEBABS

SERVES 4 / 30 MINUTES

The key to good kebabs is using very lean but tender meat; the top round is ideal (ask your butcher to cut it for you). A simple *raita*—a sauce of yogurt with chopped cucumber and mint—goes well with this, as does naan flatbread warmed on the grill.

3 medium zucchini
2 red bell peppers
¼ cup plain Greek-style yogurt
2 tbsp. chopped cilantro, plus sprigs for serving
1 tsp. garam masala*
1 tsp. kosher salt
½ tsp. curry powder
⅛ tsp. cayenne
1 tbsp. *each* fresh lemon juice and extra-virgin olive oil
1¼ lbs. lamb top round or sirloin, cut into 1-in. chunks

1. Heat a grill to high (about 450° to 550°). Cut zucchini and bell peppers into chunks about 1 in. wide. In a large bowl, stir together yogurt, chopped cilantro, garam masala, salt, curry powder, cayenne, lemon juice, and oil. Add lamb and vegetables and toss to coat.
2. Thread lamb and vegetables onto 8 (10 in.) metal skewers, keeping some space between the pieces to help them cook evenly.
3. Grill skewers until beginning to char and easy to turn, about 5 minutes, then turn as needed until lamb is medium-rare and vegetables are lightly charred but still tender-crisp, 8 to 10 minutes total.
4. Transfer skewers to a platter and top with cilantro sprigs.

** Find at well-stocked grocery stores and Indian markets.*

PER 2 SKEWERS 379 Cal., 62% (236 Cal.) from fat; 29 g protein; 26 g fat (10 g sat.); 5.5 g carbo (1.4 g fiber); 459 mg sodium; 105 mg chol. **GF/LC/LS**

In the SUNSET KITCHEN

TIPS FROM OUR TEAM



KITCHEN TALK

WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO EAT AN ARTICHOKE?

With California's artichoke crop at its peak, we're steaming them by the potful, and it seems you are too, judging by what you've said on our Facebook page. Add your ideas at *sunset.com/kitchenconversation.*

"Take out the fuzzy inside, then brush the steamed artichoke with olive oil, sprinkle with sea salt and cracked pepper, and grill until it's charred on the edges and smoky."
—CECILIA HAE-JIN LEE

"Fill [scooped-out halves] with a dipping sauce of balsamic, capers, and mayo for a great side with drinks."
—SUSAN TOMLEY SHALLENBERGER

"Dip leaves in melted butter with lemon, garlic, and [enough] grated parmesan to make it thick enough to stick."
—SHARON SULLIVAN



WE'RE LOVING ...

A seasoning for everything

Delighted. Obsessed. We've been a bit of both since trying the "everything bagel" seed mix at Ox restaurant in Portland. They sprinkle the crunchy combination on barely cooked snap peas tossed with butter and toasted sesame oil. But it's also delicious on scrambled eggs, roast chicken, even toast.

Everything Bagel Seasoning Mix
The recipe comes from *Around the Fire* (Ten Speed Press, March 2016) by Ox chefs Gabrielle Quiñónez Denton and Greg Denton, and Stacy Adimando. Spread 1/4 cup *each* **sesame** and **sunflower seeds** in a pie pan and bake in a 325° oven, shaking twice, until light golden, 7 to 8 minutes. Pour into a bowl. In a frying pan over medium heat, toast the following in turn until fragrant and slightly darker, and add to bowl: 2 tbsp. **poppy seeds**, 5 minutes; 2 tsp. **nigella seeds***, 2 minutes; 1/2 tsp. **caraway seeds**, 1 minute. Stir in 2 tsp. *each* **dried onion flakes***, **dried garlic flakes***, and **sea salt**. Stir before using.
MAKES 3/4 CUP / 15 MINUTES
**Find nigella seeds (aka charnushka and kalonji) at Indian markets and penzeys.com. Find onion and garlic flakes in the spice aisle.*

SHOPPING SMARTS

SMOKED SALMON

While testing the smoked salmon hash for our new cookbook, *Eating Up the West Coast* (page 70), we were reminded that there's a big difference between cold- and hot-smoked salmon. Most cold-smoked is cured in brine, then smoked over a low temperature so it stays silky, perfect for topping bagels. Hot-smoked (sometimes called kippered) is also cured in brine, but then smoked at a higher temperature so it's flaky and more deeply flavored—excellent in hash.





TOP TOOL | **Herb scissors** The extra-sharp blades from RSVP International in Seattle *($8.95; crateandbarrel.com)* make quick work of cutting up tender spring herbs right over a bowl of soup or salad, like this month's crunchy beet slaw (page 93).

JEFFERY CROSS (4; FOOD STYLING: FANNY PAN)





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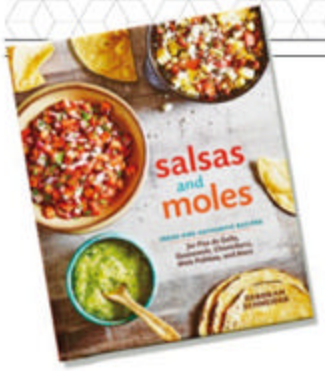
walnuts.org





*Supportive but not conclusive research shows that eating 1.5 ounces of walnuts per day as part of a low saturated fat and low cholesterol diet and not resulting in increased caloric intake may reduce the risk of coronary heart disease. (FDA) One ounce of walnuts provides 18g of total fat, 2.5g of monounsaturated fat, 13g of polyunsaturated fat including 2.5g of alpha-linolenic acid – the plant based omega-3.

In the SUNSET KITCHEN



COOKBOOK OF THE MONTH

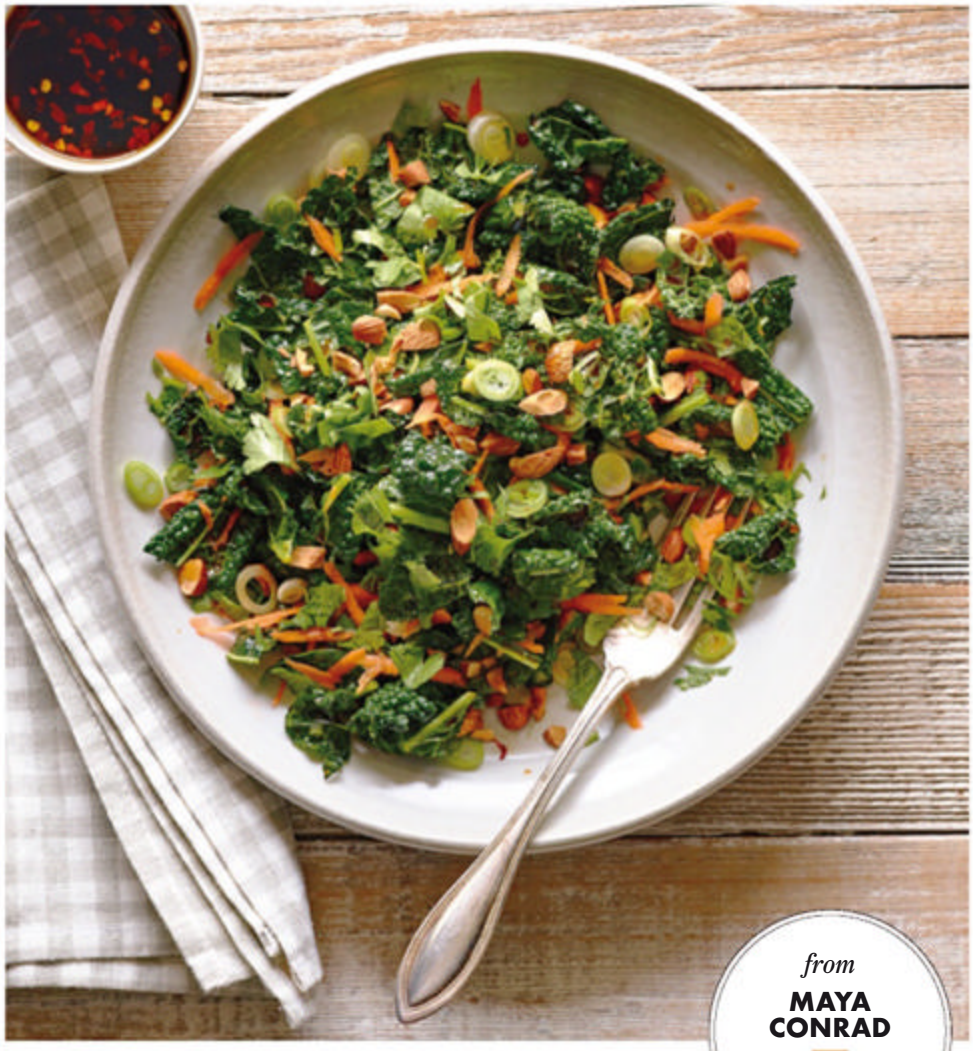
Salsas and Moles

In *Salsas and Moles* (Ten Speed Press, March 31, 2015; $17), San Diego chef-author Deborah Schneider proves that even the most basic recipe sings in the hands of a skilled cook. Her enchilada sauce, for example, gets depth from cooking the chile purée in fat to mellow its flavors. Try it with chips or enchiladas.

Simplest Enchilada Sauce

Adapted from *Salsas and Moles*. Stem and seed 2 **dried ancho chiles*** and 6 **dried guajillo** or California **chiles**, opening them flat. Heat a large cast-iron skillet over high heat. Press 1 chile at a time onto hot pan, turning once and cooking until blistered, 3 to 5 seconds per side. Submerge in a bowl with 2 cups hot water, 45 minutes. Whirl chiles and liquid in a blender with 2 **garlic cloves** and 1 tsp. **salt** until very smooth. Sauté 1½ tbsp. minced **white onion** in 2 tbsp. fresh **lard** or vegetable oil in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Add chile sauce; cook at a low boil, stirring often, 5 minutes. Add 1 cup hot water, reduce heat, and simmer 10 minutes, or longer if you want it thicker. **MAKES ABOUT 2⅓ CUPS / 1¼ HOURS**

**Buy chiles at well-stocked grocery stores and Latino markets.*



from
MAYA CONRAD
Arcata, CA

WINNING READER RECIPE

ASIAN KALE SALAD

Every time reader Maya Conrad brings this salad to potlucks, she leaves with several requests for the recipe. She likes to make a little extra for workday lunches since it holds up well.

SERVES 4 TO 6 / 30 MINUTES

1 bunch kale (about 8 oz.), chopped
1 bunch cilantro (about 4 oz.), chopped
3 green onions, thinly sliced on the diagonal
2 carrots, shredded (about 1¼ cups)
½ cup roughly chopped roasted almonds
¼ cup reduced-sodium tamari or soy sauce
2 tbsp. seasoned rice vinegar
1 tsp. toasted sesame oil
Pinch of red chile flakes

Toss all ingredients together in a large salad bowl. Let sit, tossing often, until slightly wilted, 15 to 30 minutes.

PER SERVING 97 Cal., 47% (46 Cal.) from fat; 4.2 g protein; 5.1 g fat (0.5 g sat.); 11 g carbo (3.2 g fiber); 497 mg sodium; 0 mg chol. LC/VG

JEFFERY CROSS (2)

ALL-STAR CHEF CLASSIC



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"GREEN WINE" GROWS UP

Portugal's Vinho Verde is claiming more space on wine shelves here, but it's not all the spritzy sipper of legend. *By Sara Schneider*

FIFTEEN SUMMERS AGO, I joined friends for a week on the coast of Portugal. Almost before we dropped our bags, we hit markets in search of crisp white wine, and we fell in love with Vinho Verde. The wines, named after the region in northwest Portugal where the grapes grow, were lightly fizzy, bright and minerally, under 10 percent alcohol—and *cheap.* Before long, we were engaged in a how-low-can-we-go game, happily guzzling $5, $4, $3 bottles.

Recently I returned to Portugal—to Vinho Verde itself—and I hardly recognized many of the wines. Unlike the traditional style, meant to be drunk young ("Vinho Verde," or "green wine," refers to freshness and youth), these seemed more mature and complex. Many lacked the spritz I remembered, and they were riper, with upward of 12 and even 13 percent alcohol. They were full of the gorgeous stone fruit and citrus flavors of their main grape, Alvarinho (called Albariño in neighboring Spain). In short, these were serious wines that invited me to think, not just swill. Apparently, winemakers are chasing modern international taste. (Not a bad thing—I fell in love all over again.)

The effort seems to be paying off in the United States: In the decade ending in 2013, Vinho Verde imports to this country increased more than 250 percent. My recent fact-finding missions to local shops turned up bottles in a range of styles, and not all white. My favorites, at right, run the gamut, but they're all delicious, all amazing values.



SIP

Our Vinho Verde picks

In today's best bottles, dry minerality and racy acidity balance aromatics.



Arca Nova 2013 Rosé *($12)*
Yes, Vinho Verde can be pink, even red. In this rosé, cherry and wild-rose aromas mix with minerality on the nose. A spritzy palate follows with tart red berry and cherry flavors, and citrus dances with stoniness on a long finish.*



Anselmo Mendes 2013 Contacto Alvarinho *($20)*
This modern crowd-pleaser—with plush, ripe peach, orange, and honeysuckle balanced by lime peel and minerality—comes off like a refreshing sea breeze.



Quinta da Aveleda 2013 80% Loureiro/ 20% Alvarinho *($11)*
Leaning toward tradition, an effervescent, minerally core of underripe stone fruit and citrus, with a mouth-watering saline quality, is rounded out by pear and pretty peach blossom.



Casa do Valle 2013 *($10)*
Pinpoint balance here between Old World and New World personalities: Wetstone earthiness and great acidity underlie tart apricot fruit, lemon/lime, and orange peel, with a lovely hint of jasmine.*

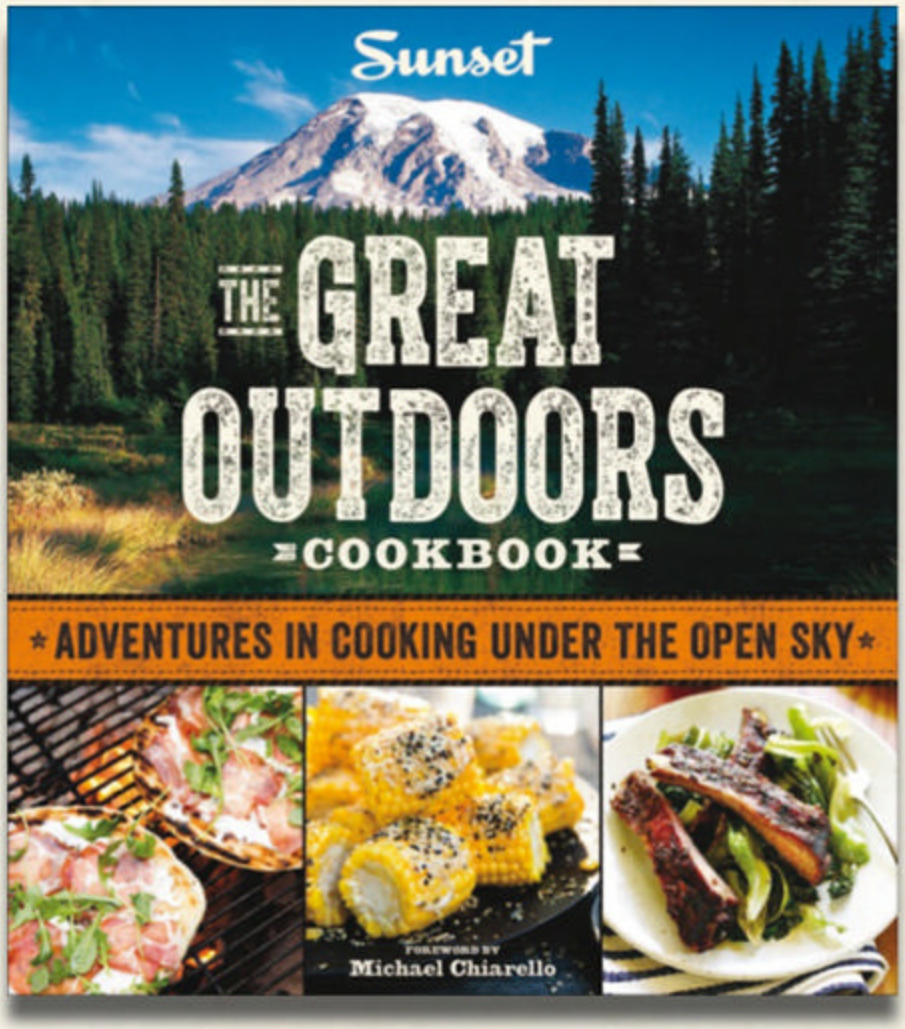
Quinta da Raza 2013 *($11)*
This one straddles the style fence with spritz and tangy lime peel on one side and sweet-seeming peach and white blossoms on the other.

**The 2013 is nearly sold out. Try the 2014 if that's what you find.*

ANNABELLE BREAKEY (5)



Join the Sunset Wine Club! *Get top wines, pairing tips, notes, and event info from wine editor Sara Schneider: sunset.com/wineclub.com.*



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Cook in Nature's Kitchen

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ASK SUNSET

HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT LIFE IN THE WEST? WE HAVE THE ANSWERS.

Q: For the first time in my life, I have a garden,

but I'm intimidated by composting. I know it's important, yet I don't know why. Can you help me take my first composting steps? —B.R., GOLETA, CA

DEAR B.R. You use conditioner to enrich your hair; you use compost to enrich your soil. It's decayed organic materials you mix into garden beds to add nutrients and improve drainage. Nurseries sell compost ready-made, but it's easy and cheap to make your own. (And beginners can skip adding food scraps to their mix.) First, spread a layer of brown material (dead leaves, straw, wood chips) about 6 inches deep over an area 3 to 5 feet square, then top it with a 2-inch layer of green matter (grass clippings) and another layer of brown matter; sprinkle the pile with water, then mix it up with a spading fork. Continue layering, watering, and mixing until the pile is about 3 feet high. Turn the pile weekly to speed decomposition. In a few months, you'll have finished compost—dark and crumbly as coffee grounds—to prep your soil for planting.





Another thing to love about Cavallo Point: walking distance to the Golden Gate Bridge.

Q: Three generations of family members ages 1 to 70 will meet in Sausalito for

a weekend in March. Can you suggest somewhere for our group to stay and fun things for us all to do? —V.L., ALAMEDA, CA

DEAR V.L. March is a smart time to visit California's cutest ex-fishing village, before summer crowds hit. A fine base of operations for your group is Cavallo Point Lodge *(cavallopoint.com),* the former Fort Baker turned resort. For grown-ups, Cavallo has a good restaurant and bar, a spa, and activities like yoga and guided hikes. For kids, there's the grassy former parade ground to play on, plus the nearby children-focused Bay Area Discovery Museum. A lower-cost option (Sausalito is an expensive town) is the charming Hotel Sausalito *(hotel sausalito.com),* or you could consider renting a house through sites like VRBO.

Q: We have a heavily used (by people and dog) downstairs office/rec area. It's carpeted, but the carpeting is tired and dirty. What floor coverings can take heavy use and look nice for a long time? —J.F., HOLLADAY, UT

DEAR J.F. Two good options are sea grass and cork. Sea grass is attractive, resists stains, and wears like iron. A disadvantage: It can feel like iron (itchy iron)—use a small area rug on top if you need a place to sit on the floor. Cork (shown) is handsome and more comfortable for sitting; in fact, it's soft enough that heavy furniture may leave dents. If you use cork tiles, it's easy to replace damaged ones.



Email your questions about Western gardening, travel, food, wine, or home design to *asksunset@sunset.com*.

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FROM LEFT: E. SPENCER TOY, THOMAS J. STORY (2)



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